

ELLERY QUEEN®

THE
WORLD'S LEADING
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Dec. 1982

\$1.75

Edward D.
Hoch

EQ RYDSTRUBBHD49AUG 84 1 01
HALSEY ROYDEN
THREE FORKS
LOS ALTOS CA

94022



Clark
Howard

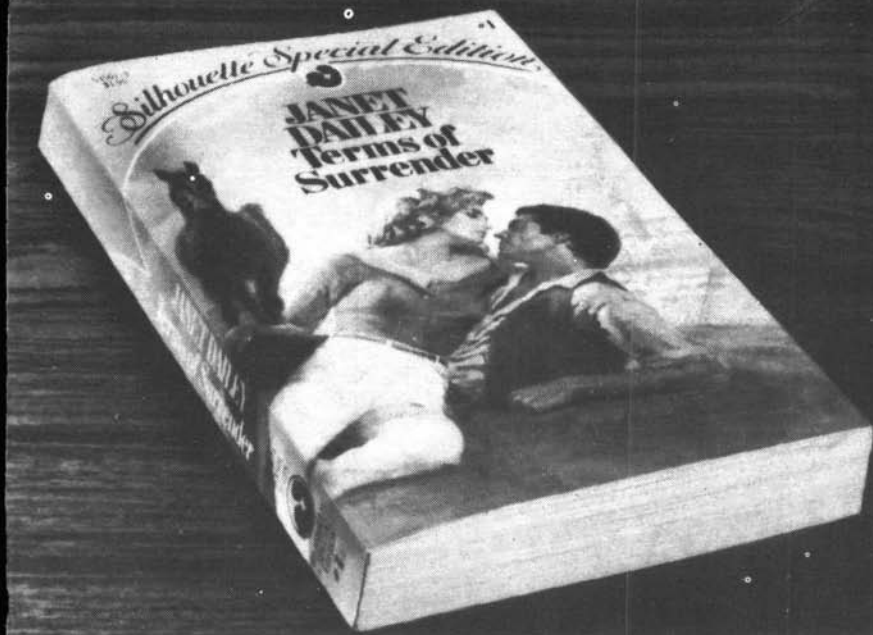
James
Holding

11 STORIES

Davis Publications
Our 25th Year



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Silhouette Special Editions go far beyond any romances you have read before. Because they have *more*—more pages, more passion, more pleasure.

These are big, powerful stories that will fire your imagination. You'll meet ardent lovers and jealous rivals—thrill to exciting conflict and drama—share intimate moments of surging emotions and tender passion. Silhouette Special Editions will keep you entranced as you turn each page.

**4 Silhouette Special Editions
FREE—no strings attached**

Now you can get the first four Silhouette Special Editions ever published, absolutely *free*. "Terms of Surrender"... "Valaquez Bride"... "Intimate Strangers"... "Mexican Rhapsody." These four books, a \$7.80 value, are *yours free for the asking*, if you act now.

**Silhouette Special Editions
Free Previews, Bonus Books,
Free Home Delivery**

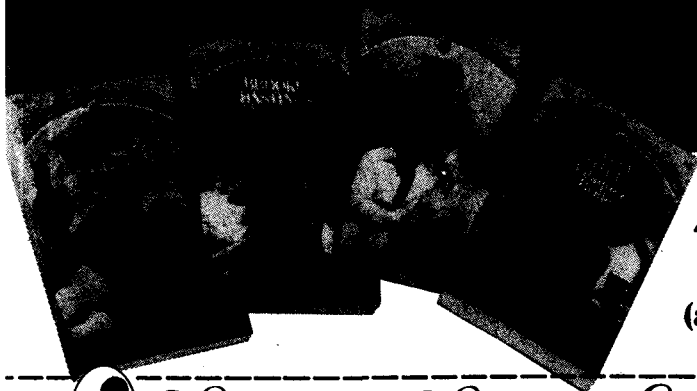
Each month Silhouette Special Editions home subscription service will send you six new books just as soon as they are published. Look them over for 15 days. If you're not delighted, return only five and owe nothing. One book is always yours free.

Silhouette Special Editions are delivered right to your door with never a charge for postage or handling—and there's no obligation to buy anything at any time.

Discover the most exciting romances being published today.
Send for your free books now.

Silhouette Special Editions,
120 Brighton Road, Clifton, NJ 07012

Are you ready for your next great romance?



**4 BOOKS
FREE**
(a \$7.80 value)



Silhouette Special Editions

Silhouette Special Editions, 120 Brighton Road, Clifton, NJ 07012

Yes, please send me FREE and without obligation, the 4 exciting Silhouette Special Edition romances described in this ad. Unless you hear from me after I receive my 4 FREE books, please send me 6 new Silhouette Special Editions to preview each month as soon as they are published. I understand that you will bill me for just 5 of them at \$1.95 each (a total of \$9.75), with no additional shipping, handling or other hidden charges. One book is always mine FREE each month. There is no minimum number of books that I must buy, and I can cancel this arrangement anytime I wish. The first 4 books are mine to keep, even if I never take a single additional book.

Name _____ (please print)

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Signature (If under 18, parent or guardian must sign) _____

This offer, limited to one per household, expires July 31, 1983. If price changes are necessary after that date, you will be notified.

EQB21A

ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY

**START
YOUR SEARCH
NOW!**

Consult Ellery Queen's
Fall/Winter Anthology
You'll find the clues to 27
intricate frightening
mysteries

Available at local newsstand

JOHN HARRINGTON
ELVA NEVESZ
BARBARA OWENS
JAMES POWELL
ION L. BREEN
FRANCIS M. NEVINS
KAY NOLTE SMITH
JOHN COYNE
DAVID MORRELL
RICHARD A. SELBY
ALICE SCANLAN REAGAN
AND OTHERS

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN

(R)

- 6 **All the Heroes Are Dead** / Clark Howard
24 **White Butterfly** / Anthony Berkeley
37 **Death's Gray Land** / Isak Romun
48 **The Beer Bust** / Sean McMartin
58 **The Katzenbacher Principle** / Stephen Wasylyk
71 **Role Model** / Al Nussbaum
76 **The Crystal Set** / Mary Braund
97 **The Photographer and the Final Payment** / James Holding
111 **Hizzoner's Water Supply** / Gerald Tomlinson
122 **I Never Saw His Face** / Jean Darling
136 **The Problem of the Tin Goose** / Edward D. Hoch
- 89 **Mystery Newsletter** / R. E. Porter & Chris Steinbrunner
94 **The Jury Box** / Jon L. Breen
158 **Index to Volume 80**

President & Publisher / Joel Davis

Editor-in-Chief / Ellery Queen

Editor / Eleanor Sullivan

Note: indicia on page 161

a **NEW** short story by

CLARK HOWARD

We once asked Clark Howard what he considered to be the hallmark of his short fiction, the quality that stamped it as his own and accounted for its easy readability. He said he believed it was the pace, the steady movement ahead from beginning to end. There's no doubt that this is true of his stories, and it is a skill aspiring writers would do well to study and emulate. But there is a further element in his fiction (and indeed his nonfiction) which cannot be studied but can be learned, and that is the fine sensibility that marks him as a caring writer who knows his subject and why he is writing about it . . .

ALL THE HEROES ARE DEAD

by **CLARK HOWARD**

The district director finished perusing the personnel file and shook his head dubiously. "Are you sure you've selected the right man for this assignment?" he asked his chief investigator. "We need someone to infiltrate a very close-knit bootlegging operation in Lasher County, Georgia. That's redneck country. This agent David Berry somehow doesn't seem the type for it. His background, I mean: political-science major at Yale, midwestern upbringing, interests in soccer and the theater—"

"His interest in the theater is precisely one of the reasons I selected Berry," the chief investigator said. "He's an amateur actor, belongs to a little-theater group in Alexandria. It's going to take someone who can put on a very good performance to fool those people in Lasher County."

"Maybe a better performance than you think," the director said.

© 1982 by Clark Howard.

"The state authorities put an undercover man down there last year. He dropped out of sight and hasn't been heard from since. There are lots of deep woods and swamps in that part of Georgia. Good places to dispose of a body."

"I still feel Berry's the man for the job," the chief insisted.

"All right," the director said with a quiet sigh. "Have him come in."

The chief rose and summoned David Berry from an outer office. When the director saw him, his doubts were by no means assuaged. Berry's hair was styled, he wore a three-piece Brooks Brothers suit, and carried an attache case. He belonged, the director thought, in the bank examiners section, not in illegal whiskey.

"Berry, you've been with Treasury for three years now," the director said. "According to your file, all of your assignments up until now have been desk work. Do you think you can handle an undercover job?"

"Yes, sir, I do," Berry replied. "I've been eager for field work for quite some time now." His voice was precise, educated.

"You've read the Lasher County file," the director said, "so you know what the case is all about. An estimated one hundred thousand gallons of liquor is being manufactured illegally somewhere down there every year. That's not what we consider a huge operation, by any means. The government loses tax revenue on about two-and-a-half-million dollars annually based on their selling price, which is around one-third the cost of legal liquor, so we wouldn't go broke if we let them operate indefinitely. But that's not the point. The issue here is a violation of the law—manufacturing liquor without a license and distributing liquor without a tax stamp."

"Most of their sales, as you know from the file," the chief said, "are to rural residents in south Georgia and Alabama, and northern Florida. People that are commonly known as 'rednecks.' They live in and around places like the Apalachicola Forest, the Osceola Forest, and the Okefenokee Swamp. That's where we think they've got their manufacturing plant—their whiskey still: in the Okefenokee."

David Berry nodded. "Yes, sir, I noticed in the file that at one point there was nearly a six-hundred-percent increase in the sale of Mason jars in the swamp communities."

The chief smiled. "That's how we pinpointed the manufacturing site. Normally they make runs about a hundred miles away for their Mason jars, but apparently they ran out of them from their regular

suppliers and had to buy locally. It was a sure tipoff—you can't bootleg hooch without Mason jars."

The director, still looking worried, sat forward and folded his hands on the desk. "Berry, I want to emphasize to you the potential peril of an assignment like this. You'll be going into a completely foreign environment, among people who are totally different from the kind you're accustomed to associating with."

"I know that, sir," Berry said. "I plan to spend a few weeks traveling around small towns in northern Georgia to learn how to act the part. I fully intend to prepare for the role."

"Your dress, your mannerisms, your speech—you'll have to change everything."

"Well, Ah don't think Ah'll have too much trouble with the speech, suh," Berry said, suddenly falling into a very good southern drawl. "Ah been listenin' to some dialect records over at that there linguistic department at the university an' Ah spect Ah'll have the talkin' down pat pretty quick like." Smiling, Berry reverted to his own speech pattern. "As for the clothes, visits to a couple of thrift shops and surplus stores will take care of that. And the mannerisms—well, just opening the beer can and drinking out of it ought to do for a start."

The chief flashed an I-told-you-so smile at the director. "We've established a complete new identity for him," he said. "His name will be Dale Barber. We chose that surname because Barber is very common in the southeastern U.S. He'll have an Alabama driver's license, army discharge, social-security card, and two membership cards to private after-hours clubs in Tuscaloosa. We picked that city because it's far enough away from where he'll be operating to make it difficult for anybody to check up on him, and it's large enough—about a hundred fifty thousand—to throw them off if they do. I think we've got all the bases covered, sir."

"It certainly seems like it." But there was still a trace of doubt in the director's voice, a gut feeling of reluctance inside him, some instinct—perhaps based on his thirty years of law-enforcement experience—that told him not to give David Berry the Lasher County assignment. It was nothing he could put his finger on and he knew if he tried to explain it to his chief investigator he would sound as if he were procrastinating. Based on the chief's recommendation and Berry's apparent ability to discharge the assignment, he was left with no choice. "All right, Berry, the job's yours," he said.

He had a feeling that he would never see the young agent again.

Three weeks later, David Berry was cruising down Highway 441, which ran parallel to the Okefenokee Swamp. He was driving a '78 Chevy pickup with a roll-bar he'd bought with agency money in Tuscaloosa. A battered suitcase and a cardboard box containing his extra clothes rode in the rear bed along with a nearly bald spare tire, a lug wrench, an empty gas can, and a six-pack of Miller's beer. In one corner of the pickup's back window was a decal of a Confederate flag. Inside the cab was a rifle rack with a .22 pump on it. A Slim Whitman tape was playing in the dashboard deck.

When David got to DeSota, the little town that was halfway down on the edge of the swamp, he circled the tiny town square once and pulled up in front of Luther's Café.

Getting out of the truck, he stretched and twisted some of the stiffness out of his back and shoulders. He knew that several people sitting by the window in the café had already noticed him, his truck, the Alabama plates. His appearance, he knew, fit the picture—old faded Levis, an inexpensive plaid cotton shirt, a blue denim vest, and a soiled yellow visor cap with an STP patch on it. The cap was pushed to the back of his now unstyled hair. On his feet he wore low-heel Frye boots.

Going inside, David sat at the counter and looked at the handwritten menu. A waitress came over to him—redheaded, well built, a sexy wide mouth, too much mascara. She wore a white uniform that had "Tommy Sue" embroidered above her left breast.

"Hi," she said, setting a glass of water in front of him.

"Hi, Tommy Sue," he said, reading her uniform. "Ah'll have three chicken wings, some coleslaw, an' fried okra. An' iced tea."

Their eyes met just long enough for them to realize it. Then David reached down the counter and retrieved the sports section of the Tallahassee *Democrat*. He pretended to read, but he was actually thinking about Eileen, his girl friend. She was working on her master's in history at Georgetown. Eileen was tall, slim, chic, and proper—almost too proper sometimes. She had not been at all pleased about this field assignment.

"Georgia!" she had said. "Really, David. Can't you get out of it somehow? The Clarys' lawn party is coming up."

"I don't want to get out of it," he had told her. "This is my first opportunity in three years to get away from a desk."

"But Georgia! Couldn't you get an assignment someplace close?"

"There aren't many illegal whiskey stills in Bethesda or Arlington

or Alexandria," he pointed out. "We have to go where the violation is. I'm sorry about the Clarys' party."

Tommy Sue brought his food and David put the paper aside. He began to eat the chicken wings with his fingers. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the fry cook come out of the kitchen, wiping his hands on a greasy apron. "That your pickup with the 'Bama plates?" he asked.

"Tha's me," David said with his mouth full.

"Where'bouts in 'Bama you from?"

"Tuscaloosa. Ax'ly Ah'm from Coker, a little piece north. But ain't nobody ever heard of Coker, so Ah say Tuscaloosa."

The fry cook nodded. "Jus' passin' through?"

David shook his head. "Lookin' for work. Heard up in Waycross that y'all had a canning factory down here that might be hirin' on."

"Cannin' factory shut down last week. Soybeans done poorly this year. Nothin' to can."

David shook his head in disappointment and kept on eating. In a booth near the window sat three men he could sense listening with interest to his conversation with the fry cook.

"Know of anything else around?" he asked.

"Such as?"

David shrugged. "Ah ain't particular. Fillin' station, farm work, construction."

"Things is real slow right now. Maybe fu'ther south. Florida maybe."

David grunted. "Ah'm runnin' low on lookin' money. There a pool-room in town?"

"Right across the square. Leon's Pool Hall."

"Maybe Ah can pick up a couple dollars."

"Don't count on it," the fry cook said.

There was a motel called Harley's Motor Inn a mile out the highway: twelve units that usually filled up only during the legal fishing season. The season was past now and the alligators were breeding in the swamp waters, so there was no one at Harley's except a notions salesman who worked the territory between Macon and Orlando. The salesman was in Unit One, so Harley put David in Unit Two when David drove out after lunch and checked in.

"How long you be staying?" Harley asked.

"Couple days maybe. Lookin' for work."

"Things is real slow around here. Be twelve-fifty a night, first night in advance. No playin' the television after midnight."

David carried his old suitcase and cardboard box into the room and unpacked. Then he pulled off his boots to stretch out on the bed for a while. It was funny about those boots. He had expected to hate them. His taste ran to Carranos: glove-leather, Italian-made. But these Frye boots, after a week of breaking in, were as comfortable as anything he'd ever put on his feet. It was the same with the Chevy pickup. In Washington he drove a low-slung Datsun 280-Z and rode close to the pavement. The cab of the pickup was up high, above everything except motor homes and tractor rigs. You saw a lot more in a pickup cab than in a sportscar.

David spent the afternoon resting, then at sunset he showered, put on clean jeans and a striped shirt, and drove back uptown. He found a phonebooth next to the post office and called the chief on a blind telephone number with a memorized credit-card number. "I'm settled," he said when the chief answered. "I should be able to spot the delivery truck tonight. Unless you hear from me to the contrary, I'm ready for stage two."

"I understand," the chief said. "Good luck."

David left the booth and walked across the street to Luther's Café again. Tommy Sue was still on duty. "You work all the time?" he asked when she handed him the supper menu.

"Girl's got to make a living," she answered. While he studied the menu she said, "I saw you in the phonebooth. Calling your wife like a good little boy?"

"Don't have no wife. Let me have the fried catfish and hush puppies. Iced tea. Pecan pie for dessert."

"Calling your girl friend then?" she asked as she wrote down his order.

"Calling my mama. Your curiosity satisfied now?"

"Well, 'scuse me for livin'," she said huffily.

Throughout his meal David occasionally caught her glancing at him. Whenever he did, he threw her a smile or a wink. She turned her nose up at him. When he paid his supper check he said, "Next time Ah talk to Mama, Ah'll tell her you said hello."

"Don't bother."

"No trouble. Ah'll tell her Ah met this here little Georgia peach who's too pretty to even describe."

"You might's well save it, Alabama. You got off on the wrong foot with me with that curiosity crack. I was only makin' small talk."

Outside the window David saw a Buick drive up to Leon's Pool Hall followed closely by a Dodge pickup. One man got out of the Buick, two out of the pickup, and they all went inside. They were the same three who had listened so intently to David's conversation with the fry cook at noon.

"Let's you and me start all over," David said, turning his attention back to Tommy Sue. "At breakfast."

"I don't work breakfast," she told him. "I come on at eleven-thirty."

"What time do you get off?"

"Nine-thirty—when we close. I work ten hours a day, four days a week. That way I get to spend three days a week with Lonnie."

"Lonnie?"

"My little boy. He's four. My mama keeps him for me, over in Talbot."

"Oh." David glanced out the window again and his thoughts went momentarily to the Dodge pickup. It looked like the right truck, he thought. The one the department had come so close to catching several times.

Tommy Sue, taking his silence for disinterest, handed him his change, shrugged, and started to walk away.

"Hey, wait a minute. What time did you say?"

"What's it matter? You turned awful cold soon's you found out I had a kid. But don't feel bad, it's happened before."

"I didn't turn cold, I simply became distracted," David said, lapsing into his normal speech before he realized it. Tommy Sue frowned, staring curiously at him. David locked eyes with her for a moment, then forced a smile. "That was Tony Randall. Ah can do Johnny Carson too." His awkward smile faded. "Can Ah come back at nine-thirty? Take you for a beer?"

She shrugged. "I guess," she said. But there was now a trace of reluctance in her voice.

David went back to his pickup and drove out of town. Cursing himself for his momentary lapse of cover, he drove up and down the back roads for an hour, until twilight came and a grayness began to settle over the red dirt fields. Then he headed back uptown. It was fully dark when he parked in front of Leon's Pool Hall. Walking toward the door, he stopped at the Dodge, put his foot up on the back bumper, and pretended to pull a pebble out of his heel. While he was doing it, he palmed a miniature electronic transmitter with a magnet

on the back of it, and attached it to the inside of the bumper. Then he went on into the pool hall.

Leon's was a prototype of every poolroom in every small town in the South. Six Brunswick tables so old their cushions could barely reject a ball. Drop pockets with net catchers. A shelf near each table holding a can of talcum for the cuestick shaft and blue chalk for its tip. A few rickety raised wooden benches for tobacco-chewing spectators. Half a dozen spittoons. Two pinball machines that paid off in free games that could be cashed in for money. A wooden bar with an illuminated beer-logo clock over the cash register behind it. And on the bar two large jars—one of pickled eggs, one of pigs' feet. All under a cloud of gray smoke that hung at the ceiling because it had noplacelse to go.

David went to the bar and got a bottle of Bud. The three men who had driven up earlier were shooting nine-ball on a middle table. David stepped up on one of the benches and sat down to watch. Two of the men shooting were either twins or brothers very close in age. They wore jeans with leather belts that had their names tooled on the back of them—Merle and Earl. The latter, David noticed, also had E-A-R-L tattooed on the top joint of each finger on his right hand. The work didn't look professional. It was a jailhouse tattoo, David guessed. The third man was the oldest, probably fifty, with a pot-belly hanging over the waist of a pair of self-belted polyester trousers. He wore a shirt that had a western scene embroidered across the yoke. David sensed that he was studying him from under a pair of tinted lenses between shots.

David watched the progress of the game, waiting for an opportunity to interject a comment. To come right out with a remark would have been poor form and would have marked him at once as a total outsider, an "up-North" type. He had to be subtle about it. He waited until Earl, the one with the tattoos, missed a fairly easy straight-in corner shot, then he rolled his eyes toward the ceiling and groaned quietly. But not so quietly that Earl couldn't hear him.

"What's your problem, boy?" Earl said antagonistically. "Don't nobody ever miss a shot where you come from?"

"Not that kind," David said. Then he raised his hands, palms out. "Hey, Ah'm sorry, hear? Ah didn't have no call to remark. It just slipped out."

"You a pool player?" asked the older man, smiling across the table.

David shrugged. "Ah shoot a game ever' now and then." Which

was a gross understatement. David had been president of the billiards club at college for five semesters.

The older man came around the table. He had a chaw of tobacco in one cheek, but instead of using a spittoon he kept a Dixie cup handy. "We heard you say at Luther's today that you hoped to win a little money over here. You care to shoot a game of rotation with Earl here? Say for twenty-five dollars?"

David pursed his lips. "That's mighty temptin'."

The man in the polyester trousers smiled. "What's your name, boy?"

"Dale Barber. From Tuscaloosa, Alabama."

"I didn't ask where you was from. My name's Billy Roy Latham. My friends call me Billy Roy. You can call me Mr. Latham." He peeled twenty-five dollars off a roll and stuck it in one of the corner pockets. "Anytime you're ready."

David covered the bet and beat Earl 67 to 53. He could have run the balls and blanked him, but he didn't want to look like a slicker trying to skin the locals. Neither did he want his thumbs broken. So he laid back and just won by two balls, the six and the eight. As he was fishing his winnings out of the pocket, Earl's brother Merle said, "Lemme have a crack at him, Billy Roy."

Latham nodded and put another twenty-five in the pocket. Merle was about in the same league as Earl. David beat him a little more badly, 71 to 49, winning with the two, three, seven, and ten balls.

After the game with Merle, Latham removed his tinted glasses and smiled an artificial smile at David. "Ah cain't decide if you're good or jus' lucky. How 'bout you and me shoot a game for the fifty you've won?"

David glanced around. A dozen men had idled up from the other tables and were gathered around watching. They were somber, leathery men, their eyes squinty from years in the bright sun of the fields. Maybe they worked for Latham, maybe they didn't. But David knew instinctively that even if he had wanted to there was no way he'd be allowed to walk out with the fifty he had won.

"How 'bout it, boy?" Latham pressed. "You an' me for fifty each."

"Whatever you say, Mr. Latham."

The balls were racked and Latham won the break. He made the six on the break, then ran the one, two, and three, and dropped the twelve off the three-ball. David saw at once that Latham was a much better pool shooter than Merle and Earl.

On his first shot, David ran the four, five, seven, and eight, tying

it up with twenty-four points each. Latham made the nine and ten, but scratched on the ten and had to spot it back on the table. David then made it in the side pocket but missed the eleven-ball. Latham made the eleven. David made the thirteen, to go three points ahead, 47 to 44. Latham made the fourteen, to move up to forty-eight. Then he missed the fifteen and it was David's turn.

The fifteen was the game-winning ball. It was dead on the side rail, midway down from the end pocket. Its position did not present a difficult shot, merely a tricky one—the cueball had to hit the rail and the fifteen-ball at the same time in order to run the fifteen straight along the cushion into the pocket. If the cueball hit the fifteen first, the fifteen would be brought out from the rail and go nowhere, leaving the opponent a good shot. If the cueball hit the rail first, the fifteen would roll straight along the rail but wouldn't have enough momentum to go all the way to the pocket.

David chalked his cue-tip and bent low over the far end of the table. Wetting his lips, he took dead-perfect aim and let go a slow shot that hit the fifteen and the cushion at the same time. The fifteen rolled along the rail—and stopped four inches from the pocket.

There was a general murmur of approval from the onlookers: the stranger had lost. David shook his head and stepped back. Billy Roy Latham leaned casually over the side rail and eased the ball on in to win the game. He got more than a few pats on the back as he dug the fifty dollars out of the end pocket.

In the men's room, David and Latham stood side by side washing the talcum off their hands at a tin sink. "You could've made that last shot," Latham said quietly.

"Can't win 'em all," David said.

"You could've won that one. Why didn't you?"

David shrugged. "Your town, your people. No call to beat a man in his own town. 'Sides, Ah broke even."

Latham studied him for a long moment as he dried his hands. Then he made up his mind about David and nodded to himself. "There's a place called Joe's Pit out on the highway that's got good barbecued ribs and ice-cold beer. How 'bout havin' a bite?"

"No offense," David said, "but Ah got other plans." He winked at Latham. "Tommy Sue over at the café."

Latham grinned. "You Alabama rednecks is all the same. After the sun goes down you only got one thing on your mind."

"Yep. Jus' like you Georgia rednecks." David bobbed his chin. "See you around."

He bought a cold six-pack at Luther's and drove away from the square with Tommy Sue. "Where do ya'll park around here?" he asked.

"Out by the cemetery. It's quiet there."

"Ah reckon it would be."

She showed him the way. When they were parked, David opened both doors of the pickup and two cans of the beer. They sat holding hands and sipping the beer. Someone had burned a stump during the day and there was still a smell of scorched wood in the air. It mixed with the fragrance of hackberry plants that grew wild along the side of the road. The result was an odd, almost sensual night scent. After they finished a can of beer each, David guided Tommy Sue onto the seat and put his lips on her throat. He found himself whispering things to her that he would never have dared say to Eileen. Things that made Tommy Sue draw in her breath and entwine her fingers in his hair.

It was later, when they were having their second beer, that she asked, "Who are you anyway?"

"Jus' plain ol' Dale Barber from Tuscaloosa, honey."

"You're not 'just plain old' anybody from anywhere," she said. "And that wasn't no Tony Randall imitation you were doing earlier. That was the real you."

David looked out at the moonlight and thought it over. "Suppose it was the real me? What would you do about it?"

"Depends on who you came here to hurt. I'm not from DeSota, I'm from Talbot, but the people here been good to me. I wouldn't stick nobody in the back."

"I wouldn't ask you to. Let's get to know each other a little better first. Then we can decide what's right and what's wrong." He kissed the tips of her fingers as he talked.

"You're so gentle," she said softly. "I can't imagine you hurting nobody." She turned her hand around. "Do that to the palm."

"Tell me about your little boy."

"I already told you. His name is Lonnie and he's four and my mama keeps him for me over in Talbot. He's just like any other little boy. Likes cowboys and trucks and beaches. I keep tellin' him we'll go down to the Florida beaches some weekend but, Lord, I never seem to find the time."

"Where's his daddy?"

"Run off with another woman. Last I heard he was on welfare out in California. He left me with Lonnie to raise. I couldn't find no work in Talbot so I come over here to DeSota. A friend of Mama's sent me to see Mr. Latham. He gave me the job at Luther's and fixed the hours so I could spend three days a week back home."

"Billy Roy Latham? He owns Luther's?"

"Sure. Luther's. Leon's Pool Hall. DeSota Market. The filling station, the canning factory, even the undertaker's parlor. He owns just about everything in Lasher County."

"When he helped you out, did he make any moves on you?"

"Not one. He's been a perfect gentleman. He's good to lots of people, and most times he don't ask nothin' in return."

A Georgia godfather, David thought. He had guessed as much from the demeanor of the men in the poolroom. But he had not imagined that Latham owned the entire county. It would be interesting to see how he reacted the following day when his illegal whiskey operation began to fall apart.

But that was tomorrow and tonight was still tonight. David slipped his hand up Tommy Sue's back under her blouse. He felt nothing except flesh.

"Where do you stay the four nights you're in DeSota?" he asked.

"Out at Harley's Motor Inn. I rent Number Twelve by the week."

"I'm in Number Two," he told her.

She put her lips on his ear. "Small world," she said.

David started the pickup.

The next day when David drove up to Luther's for breakfast, Billy Roy Latham and one of the brothers, Merle, were drinking coffee in a booth and looking worried. David nodded a greeting and sat at the counter. The fry cook was in the kitchen doorway, moving a toothpick back and forth in his mouth. "Somethin' wrong?" David asked, bobbing his chin toward the somber men in the booth.

"Revenue agents caught that fellow's brother Earl with a load of bootleg last night. Got him just after he crossed the Florida line."

David nodded. "Oh." The fry cook's wife, who worked mornings until Tommy Sue came on, handed him a menu. "Just grits and sausage," David said.

While David was eating, Merle got up and left the booth. After he was gone, Latham waved David over to join him. "Bring your

plate on over," he said hospitably. David carried his coffee and the rest of his meal over.

"How'd you make out with Tommy Sue last night?" Latham asked.

"Struck out," David lied. "She's a right proper girl."

"You got that right," Latham said. "Gonna make a fine little wife for some man someday." Latham sighed wearily and took a sip of coffee.

"Fry cook tells me you got problems this morning," David said.

Latham shot an irritated look over at the counter. "Fry cook's got a big mouth." Then he studied David for a moment. "But he's right. One of them boys you whipped at pool last night got caught in a revenue-agent trap." Latham narrowed his eyes. "You know anything about bootlegging?"

"A little," David admitted.

Latham tossed down his last swallow of coffee. "Come on, take a ride with me. Somethin' I want to show you."

They rode in Latham's Buick down Route 441 to a narrow county road that cut east into Okefenokee Swamp. Five miles along, Latham turned into a rutted dirt path barely wide enough for the car to negotiate. The farther they drove, the more the morning sunlight was shut out by the entangled treetops overhead and the more eerie the great swamp became. A bit of fog still clung to the ground on both sides of the car, looking wet and cold, making David think of the warmth he had left behind in Tommy Sue's bed. He shivered slightly and wished he was still there.

Before the road ended, Latham turned into a bog path and guided the car with a sure, practiced eye onto a log raft ringed with empty 55-gallon drums to keep it afloat. Sticking his head out the window, he whistled three times. Presently the raft began to float across the marsh to an island, being pulled along by an unseen rope under the murky water. The trip took only three or four minutes, then Latham, who had not even shut off the engine, drove the car onto the island and into a stand of tall pines. David saw the rope and pulley that were used to bring the raft over. A black man with enormous muscles was standing next to the pulley crank. "That's Mose," said Latham. "He can crush a man's skull between his hands." David didn't doubt it for a moment.

The car drove through the shade of the pines, and up ahead David could see the whiskey still. It consisted of several large wooden tubs and a couple of cast-iron vats with kerosene burners under them. Everything was connected by wires and tubes, and with the escaping

steam and the bubbling surface in two of the vats it reminded David of the mad doctors' laboratories he used to see in the movies as a kid. Latham parked and they got out. "Come on," he said, "I'll give you the ten-cent tour."

He led David to the layout of tubs, where several lean sweating white men were pouring industrial alcohol from ten-gallon cans into the first tub, then straining it through a water-and-charcoal filter into a second one. "Tha's how we wash the noxious chemicals out of the alky," Latham said. "Over here in this here tub is where we mix water with the alky, then we run it into that iron vat and cook it some, put some caramel or butterscotch coloring in it to make it look good, then run it into the last tub there to simmer and cool." He grinned sheepishly. "I usually pour a fifth of bonded rye into the final batch to give it a little extra flavor. Like a taste?"

"Why not?" David said.

Behind the last vat were several young boys filling Mason jars with the freshly cooled liquor. Latham opened one of the jars and handed it to David. Although his taste ran to very dry martinis and good brandy, David knew he had to take a convincing drink of the bootleg stuff, as if he'd been drinking it all his life. He took a respectable swallow, prepared to forcibly hold back both cough and tears if necessary, but to his surprise the drink went down not only smoothly but with a tart good taste. He saw that Latham was smiling at him.

"Smooth, ain't it?"

"Sure is, man," David admitted. "And good too."

"Ah don't make nothin' but the best for my customers," Latham bragged. He nodded toward a picnic table and benches under a low weeping willow at the edge of the clearing. "Let's set a spell." As he spoke, Latham pulled back one side of his coat and for the first time David saw that he had a pistol stuck in his belt. Glancing around, he also now saw two men armed with rifles, one at each end of the compound. "Sure 'nuff, Mr. Latham," David said easily and followed him over to the table.

"You know," Latham said, sitting down and shaking a Camel out of a soft pack, "I sometimes wonder what the ol' world's comin' to. I read in the papers and see on the evenin' news all the stories about crime in the streets, violence in the schools, poverty in the slums, crooks in gub'ment, all that sort of thing. Makes me realize more ever' day that things is changin' too fast to keep up with—and not necessarily for the better neither. Hell, even all the heroes are dead.

Harry Truman's dead. Audie Murphy's dead. John Steinbeck's dead. Ain't nobody around to admire no more. Nowadays all's a man can do is hope to keep his own little part of the world protected from outside influences that might corrupt it. You take Lasher County now. It's my own little corner of the earth and I try to look after it as best I can. I own nearly all there is to own from one end of it to the other, and ever'body except the postmaster and a couple of bankers works for me."

Latham leaned forward on the table and locked eyes with David.

"I run this county like the whole country ought to be run. We don't have no welfare recipients or food stamps down here 'cause we don't need 'em. Ever'body that *can* work *does* work. An' the ones that can't, why the others takes care of 'em. Our old people and our sick people don't want for nothin'. Nobody sleeps cold in the wintertime, nobody goes hungry at suppertime, and nobody has to be afraid *anytime*. We ain't got no real crime in Lasher County—no robberies, burglaries, that sort of thing. People here *work* for what they want. They work for me—in my café, my pool hall, my grocery market, my filling station, my farms, my canning factory, and ever'thing else I own. My farms and canning factory are the economic backbone of this county. And when the economy don't stay up, when crops are bad or inflation keeps me from making enough to go around for ever'body, why then this whiskey bi'nness takes up the slack. It's this right here—" he waved an arm around "—that keeps the people of Lasher County free and independent of the rest of our dyin' and decayin' society." Now Latham's expression seemed to turn hard as stone. "And I'm here to tell you I'll do anythin' I have to do to keep it that way. Do you take my meanin'?"

David, his mouth as dry as old wood, managed to speak. "Yessir, Mr. Latham. I take your meanin'."

"Good," Latham said quietly. He sat back and seemed to relax a little, toying with the burnt-out stick match he had used to light his cigarette. "I don't know," he said matter-of-factly, "if it was just a coincidence you comin' to town one day and Earl gettin' caught with a load that same night. I don't know if you're really Dale Barber from Tuscaloosa or if you're a revenue agent from Washington. I know that Tommy Sue is crazy about you—I talked to her on the phone after Harley called to tell me you'd left the motel. Incidentally, I admire the fact that you said you struck out with her instead of braggin' the other way; that's the mark of a good man. Anyway, Tommy Sue says she thinks you're who you say you are."

She lied for me, David thought.

"But I'd like to hear it from you," Latham said. "For some funny reason I kind of like you. And I kind of trust you. Enough to give you the benefit of the doubt anyhow. I think I'll know if you lie to me. So I'll just ask you outright: who are you, boy?"

A montage of his own world saturated David's mind. Washington. Eileen. The Clarys' lawn party. Dry martinis. Sportscars. Italian shoes. Styled hair. A career in government.

Then the montage dissolved into another world. Lasher County. Frye boots and Levis. A Chevy pickup. Catfish and hush puppies. Tommy Sue's warm neck and the things he could whisper against it.

David met Billy Roy Latham's fixed stare with a calm sureness. "I'm Dale Barber, Mr. Latham. From Tuscaloosa."

The letter he wrote to the district director was brief and polite. He was sorry to resign so abruptly in the middle of a field assignment but he had been offered a job in private industry that he couldn't turn down. He wished the department luck in its pursuit of further leads in Lasher County even though based on his own investigation he didn't believe it would be possible to find an illegal whiskey still in the vast Okefenokee Swamp.

The letter to Eileen was also brief, and apologetic. He was leaving government service for private employment and he had to be honest and tell her he had become interested in another woman. He would always remember her fondly, he said, and was certain that, attractive educated woman that she was, she would find someone who deserved her much more than he did.

He mailed the letters in the box outside the DeSota post office, then pulled up in front of Luther's just as Tommy Sue was leaving for the night. She was carrying a small suitcase.

"Hop in," he said. "I'll give you a lift."

"I'm fixin' to catch the ten o'clock bus to Talbot," she told him. "My three days off starts tomorrow."

"I'll give you a lift to Talbot," he said.

"You mean it?"

"Sure I mean it. Get in."

She put her suitcase in the back and climbed into the cab.

"I start work for Mr. Latham on Monday," he told her.

Tommy Sue's eyebrows went up. "Doin' what?"

"Helping him run Lasher County, honey. He said a good ol' boy

like me from Tuscaloosa would fit right in. Said that someday I might even take over and run it for him. How's that for a future?"

"Sounds like you've got the future all worked out. What about the past?"

"There isn't any past," David replied quietly. "There's just today. And tomorrow. Listen, let's pick up your little boy and drive down to Florida to the beach. Would you like that?"

"I'd like it just fine." Tommy Sue slid over close and curled up to him. "You're wrong about there bein' just today and tomorrow," she said.

"Am I? What else is there?"

"There's tonight."

The pickup drove out of town and into the Georgia night.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

A SHARP INSTRUMENT

by *MARY A. BROOKS*

At the dentist's a patient felt mean,
But eventually vented his spleen.
While awaiting his filling,
He started in killing
Some time with his *Ellery Queen*.

© 1982 by *Mary A. Brooks*.



If you are a real mystery reader, Ellery Queen's Mystery Club is for you. In our books, you will escape with the greatest suspense writers of our time. Authors like Pentecost, Queen, Simenon and MacDonald. You will lose yourself in the worlds of Barbara Michaels, Elizabeth Peters and Velda Johnston. Only Ellery Queen's Mystery Club gives you collections of short stories and novellas that are guaranteed to thrill the real mystery lover.

Recent selections have included **SOMEONE IN THE HOUSE**, Barbara Michaels' critically acclaimed, full-length romantic suspense novel. And **ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE**, the latest short story anthology from The Mystery Writers of America. Month after month, you'll discover only the best in mystery and the macabre in your mailbox.

While thousands of mysteries come out each year only a select few are chosen to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Club. And these select few stories are offered only to a select group...our club members. Join us in savoring the finest of mystery fare.

There's no mystery to how our club works. Send no money now. Just fill in the coupon and mail it to Ellery Queen's Mystery Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

ESCAPE!

Escape with the masters of mystery and romantic suspense for only \$1.00.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576

Yes. Please enroll me as a member and rush me the collection checked below. I enclose no money now. After 10 days' examination, I will either keep the book and pay \$1.00 plus shipping, or I'll return it. As a member, I will receive seven times a year, advance descriptions of future selections, currently at \$7.95 plus shipping, and may reject any I do not want, in advance. If I am not satisfied I may return any book within 21 days and owe nothing. I may cancel membership at any time with no obligation.

E05H2Q

Check only one selection below:

- ☐ **The Love Talker** By Elizabeth Peters
- ☐ **The Walker in Shadows** By Barbara Michaels
- ☐ **A Presence in an Empty Room** By Velda Johnston
- ☐ **Ellery Queen—Circumstantial Evidence**
- ☐ **Ellery Queen—Veils of Mystery**
- ☐ **Ellery Queen—Wings of Mystery**
- ☐ **Alfred Hitchcock—Tales to Fill You With Fear**
- ☐ **Alfred Hitchcock—Tales to Scare You Stiff**
- ☐ **Alfred Hitchcock—Tales to be Read With Caution**

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ (Please print clearly)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S. and Canada only. Offer slightly different in Canada. 2 - AU

a Roger Sheringham story by

ANTHONY BERKELEY

In Murder for Pleasure Howard Haycraft wrote, "Few authors have had a more salutary or vitalizing effect on the detective story than A. B. Cox . . . whether he is writing as Anthony Berkeley or as Francis Iles."

The astute but fallible Roger Sheringham made his debut in 1925 with The Layton Court Mystery when the author, Anthony Berkeley Cox, was thirty-two. It was published anonymously but soon followed by many others under the Berkeley name, most notably the ingenious The Poisoned Chocolates Case. "White Butterfly" originally appeared in the London Evening Standard on August 28, 1936, and later in Fifty Famous Detectives of Fiction, a collection published by Odhams Press, London, in 1938. Neither Mr. Cox's literary executor nor "the Anthony Berkeley Cox specialist," Paul R. Moy, who was kind enough to supply us with a copy of the story, knows of any previous publication in the U.S. . . .

WHITE BUTTERFLY

by **ANTHONY BERKELEY**

Roger Sheringham frowned at the paper in his hand. "Well, Mr. Sheringham?" asked his guest, in tones of resignation.

"This is most disturbing, Moresby," said Roger. He had been amusing himself for the last half hour by testing the word reactions of Detective Chief-Inspector Moresby. The results indubitably proved the Chief-Inspector to be an introvert, a potential murderer, and a trafficker in illicit drugs.

© Anthony Berkeley 1936; reprinted by permission of the Society of Authors.

"Most disturbing," he repeated, eyeing the burly form of his guest with a new interest. "Have some more beer."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Sheringham. I don't mind if I do."

As he replenished the tankards Roger acquainted Moresby with the discoveries he had just made.

"Ah, well," said Moresby comfortably, "it's a wonderful science, this psychology, I expect. Why don't you apply it to this affair at Clearmouth?"

Roger pricked up his ears. "What affair at Clearmouth?"

"What? You haven't heard of it, Mr. Sheringham?" grinned Moresby maliciously. "Well, there. But it hasn't got into the papers, so perhaps you wouldn't."

"Tell me," Roger demanded.

Moresby took a deep pull at his tankard, wiped his walrus mustache with some care, and told him.

The county authorities (said Moresby) had been perturbed by the rumors concerning the disappearance of a certain Mrs. Warrington from her home in the small seaside town of Clearmouth. Mrs. Warrington, a pretty and charming but somewhat volatile woman, had not been seen for about six weeks. Her husband, who was a man of some consequence in Clearmouth, being the little town's only solicitor, had confided to a couple of close friends, under the strictest promises of secrecy, that she had left him to go to her lover and that he had no expectation of ever seeing her again; nor indeed would he take her back should she try to return.

There had been a scene during the evening she left when Warrington had first discovered the intrigue. According to his account she had flung in his face the information that it had been in progress for two years, that she had never cared for him, and had married him only for his position, which at the time of their marriage had certainly been a great deal better than hers.

He had upbraided her and she had retorted by taunting him with having been deceived so successfully and so long. Repeated questions failed to bring out the name of her lover, and Warrington could only gather that he was a married man, that the plans discussed by the two for over a year were now ready, that the man was going to get a divorce from his wife in order to marry Mrs. Warrington as soon as her own divorce was through, and that evidence enabling Warrington to file his petition for this would shortly be offered him.

Mrs. Warrington appeared to feel no shame, and Warrington was thunderstruck by the revelation of her real character, hitherto quite

unsuspected by him. That this scene, or something like it, had certainly taken place was confirmed by the servants, who had heard the raised and angry voices.

In the end Warrington had given his wife a week in which to leave the house. She had thanked him ironically and cut down the period to half an hour. Her lover was staying in the neighborhood, she told him, and she would simply take a small case to hold her jewels and a few necessities and leave at once. The rest of her clothes could be sent on later, when she was able to furnish an address, or maybe she would never send for them at all as she wished to take into her new life nothing that would remind her of the distasteful old one.

She had then flounced up to her bedroom and shortly afterward had left the house on foot. The servants did not hear her leave, for the time of departure, according to Mr. Warrington, was after half past eleven and by then they were in bed.

Since then, Mr. Warrington informed his close friends, he had not heard from her, nor expected to do so, and once the first shock had worn off considered he was well rid of her. As to the identity of her lover, he had not the least idea—and a search of her room and belongings since she went had revealed nothing.

The close friends then went out and, overlooking their promises, spread the good news far and wide.

So much for Mr. Warrington's story. Subsequent gossip, on the other hand, was quite different.

Boiled down, and with the toothsome details steamed out of it, this amounted in substance to the conviction that Mr. Warrington had killed his wife that evening, taken the body out to sea in his convenient little motor-launch, and there buried it without benefit of clergy. The circumstantial story which he subsequently told, so the gossips affirmed, had been carefully thought out and divulged to the close friends under pledges of secrecy because Mr. Warrington knew that this was the surest way of broadcasting it without embarrassment to himself, and he had chosen the friends in question with a canny eye to their fallibility in the matter of solemn pledges. So if Mr. Warrington himself was harshly treated by the gossip, the friends too did not altogether escape.

"And the authorities believe there's something in the rumors?" Roger asked when Moresby had finished.

"There's no evidence for or against the man's story, Mr. Sheringham. Not a jot. But if he is lying—well, it wouldn't be the first

case where the police were put on the track by local gossip, would it?"

"No. But usually there's a body to exhume, and that makes the real point of departure for the case. Here, I take it, there's nothing. What have the police done?"

"Oh, they've questioned Warrington, of course, and searched the house. But he sticks to his story, and of course he's up to every trick of law; and as for the house there was nothing incriminating at all. I happen to know about it because the Super down there's a friend of mine and he consulted me unofficially. He told me that when Warrington was away they even probed the flower-beds with iron rods, and any other place in the garden that looked as if it had been disturbed lately, but they couldn't find a thing. No, it looks as if he'd got away with it all right."

"They really do think he killed his wife, then?"

"They're not satisfied that he didn't," corrected Moresby, with official caution.

Roger smiled. "And what do you want me to do about it, Moresby?"

"I wouldn't *want* you to do anything, Mr. Sheringham. But it did occur to me, since they can't very well send for us just on the strength of a bit of local gossip, that if you did happen to be taking a bit of a holiday soon in the neighborhood of Clearmouth, I could give you a note to the Super there and I wouldn't say that he mightn't mind having a bit of a chat with you."

"Oh, you wouldn't?" Roger laughed. "Very well, Moresby. I'm due for a bit of a holiday in any case. I'll go down to Clearmouth tomorrow. You can write that note here and now."

Roger presented his note at the headquarters of the County Police two days later. Superintendent Fisher, a bulky, red-faced, friendly man, made no bones about being pleased to see him.

"We're in a difficult position, you see, Mr. Sheringham," he told Roger as they sat together in his office. "Between you and me, there's a grave suspicion that the man's made away with his wife. But we've nothing to go on. Nothing at all. His story holds water, and unless we can find the body we can't do a thing. And since that's probably at the bottom of the sea a couple of miles out, we don't stand much chance of finding it."

"You think he buried her at sea, then?"

"It'd be his best move, wouldn't it? We can't get any evidence about his launch being out that night, but if he killed her that's about what he did."

"I wonder," said Roger.

The Superintendent looked at him sharply. "You don't agree?"

"Oh, I don't say that. In any case, it's impossible to say what he might or might not do till I've had a look at him. I'll call on him this afternoon. I shall be a wealthy manufacturer of electric belts and I want to make my will. I'm staying at Clearmouth for a holiday and I understand the bathing's dangerous. I'm consulting a strange solicitor because I don't want to let my own solicitor know of a change I'm making in the disposition of my fortune after death."

The Superintendent laughed heartily. "Very well, Mr. Sheringham. And perhaps after you've made your will you'll come and tell what your impressions were."

"Certainly I will. And, of course, the first thing I've got to try to decide is whether the man seems capable of murder at all. Very few people are. If he isn't, he's probably telling the truth about that last evening with his wife. We mustn't, after all, lose sight of that possibility."

"Oh, of course, it's quite on the cards that the lady's alive and well with her gentleman friend and all our trouble's for nothing," agreed the Superintendent. It was, however, clear from his tone that he considered the possibility a remote one.

Roger went out to catch his bus.

Clearmouth proved to be a charming little old-fashioned town. Lying a mile or two up an estuary, it had escaped the appalling fate which has overtaken most charming towns on the South Coast during the last couple of decades. It contained no banana-stalls, no sightseeing buses, and scarcely any horrid little bungalows; but it did contain a quantity of scandalmongers.

The house in the cobble-paved main street in which Mr. Warrington had his offices was in keeping with the rest: a mellow little Queen Anne affair with the tint of a ripe peach. Its bay-windows and carved door-frames almost reconciled Roger to the half hour's delay before he was admitted to the presence. Mr. Warrington, he gathered in casual chat from the clerk in charge, was a very busy man. Then a rubicund face, almost exactly matching the ripe color of the brick outside, was poked abruptly round one of the carved door-frames, a rich fruity voice that harmonized excellently with the face inquired for Mr. Merribrook, and a plump little hand waved a simultaneous welcome and invitation into the adjoining room. The interview had begun.

Sitting in a comfortable armchair, Roger studied his quarry. If

Mr. Warrington—plump, red-faced, and jolly—really was a murderer, he was as unlike the popular idea of one as he was unlike the popular idea of a solicitor. To Roger he appeared more like a modern edition of one of the Cheeryble brothers, with his fruity little chuckle that punctuated almost every other sentence, whether called for or not. Was it possible, Roger wondered as the interview progressed, that such a chuckle could get on a wife's nerves until she could bear it no longer and took to a lover as a kind of relief? Stranger things have happened in feminine psychology.

Mr. Warrington might look like a combination of a Cheeryble brother and a hunting squire, but he was a shrewd man. Roger realized that soon enough, to his own discomfort, for the solicitor's questions concerning his alleged electric-belt business were so searching and, as time went on, so artful that Roger had difficulty in keeping the discussion on the topic of his mythical family. He began to regret his semi-humorous choice of so impossible a profession: the more as he thought he detected an increasing twinkle in the other's blue eye.

The disposal of the electric-belt manufacturer's wealth went on. Legacies were made to imaginary aunts, nephews, nieces, and even cousins till Roger was hard put to it to invent their names; and still he could not make up his mind whether the man sitting on the opposite side of the table was a potential murderer or not.

He tried to imagine Mr. Warrington in a rage.

Undoubtedly he might possess a violent temper. But was he not shrewd enough to control it? Or was he capable of carrying out a murder planned in advance? What were the secret springs under that hearty, squirelike exterior? For the life of him Roger could not decide. Was there even a haunted expression at the back of the man's blue eyes, a hint of tragedy, remorse, fear, anything you like? If there was, Roger could not discern it.

His imagination began to flag. He mumbled something about having forgotten his notes. Might he come in again tomorrow? Mr. Warrington agreed that he might and made a note of the appointment. His mission still unfulfilled, Roger rose to go, not too well pleased with himself. Hearty Mr. Warrington, now heartier than ever, rose too, his eyes twinkling.

"Well, till tomorrow then, Mr. Sheringham."

"Yes," nodded Roger, and then jumped. "Eh?"

"Oh, I recognized you at once. You know, you didn't carry that

electric-belt business off very well," chuckled Mr. Warrington. "Why electric-belts, after all? In fact, why this interview at all?"

Roger had succeeded in getting control of himself. He decided in a sudden inspiration to try shock-tactics.

"Because," he said deliberately, "I wanted to size you up, Mr. Warrington, in view of all these rumors about you."

"I'm honored." Mr. Warrington did not seem in the least put out. On the contrary, he appeared much amused. "You wanted to find out whether I'm a potential murderer, I suppose. Well, well, I knew the police were interested in this absurd gossip—after all, it's their duty to be so—but I didn't know I'd attracted the amateurs, too. Dear me, if this kind of thing goes on I shall have to offer a large reward to Marian to make herself known. If I've learned anything about her now, that should do the trick.

"As it is, I can't even have the divorce papers served on her. Seriously, Mr. Sheringham, instead of trying to make me out a murderer, which I'm not, why don't you try to trace Marian for me? That would be much more useful work and I'd be quite ready to offer you a substantial fee in the event of success." He smiled inquiringly.

"I intend to trace your wife, Mr. Warrington," Roger said significantly. "And there'll be no question of fee."

"Oh, just as you like. Still, let me give you a pointer. Try an interview with our local philanderer, Major Cresswell, out at Filleys—about a mile along the Axminster road. I don't say he can help you, but if anyone round here can he's the most likely person."

Somewhat stiffly, Roger took his leave. He did not usually mind having his leg pulled, but there were occasions when it seemed to him out of place. Pondering, he walked absently through the sunny little town and took the first road that offered on the other side. He felt he needed exercise to help in sorting out the impressions of this ambiguous interview. Not even the last exchange had been able to make up his mind about Warrington.

Glancing at a signpost, he saw that he was on the Axminster road. Glancing, twenty minutes later, at a name on a gate, he saw that he was abreast of Filleys. He turned in at the drive a little defiantly. Chance and no set purpose had brought him here. Very well. He would see what chance had to offer.

Filleys was one of those boxlike Georgian houses and Roger estimated that its grounds, and a field or two which obviously belonged to it, covered about six acres. The people living here would be comfortably off though not wealthy.

This time, discarding subterfuge, he sent in his own name and asked for Major Cresswell. The message came back that Major Cresswell was in the garden, and would Mr. Sheringham join him there. Led by a neat parlormaid through a long, high-ceilinged drawing-room, Roger took the path indicated to him through the wide-open French windows to the rose-garden, where the major was pottering.

If Major Cresswell was Clearmouth's local philanderer, he certainly did not look the part. A tall man with a clipped mustache and the typical soldier's small, round head, he advanced briskly, his face questioning. Roger realized that, this time, his name conveyed nothing.

"Good morning," he began, with a briskness to match the other's. "I'm sorry to interrupt you, Major, but I'm making a few inquiries concerning the disappearance of Mrs. Warrington and I understand that you can help me."

The Major first looked astonished. Then he frowned. "Did Warrington tell you that?"

"Yes," Roger replied deliberately.

The Major's frown deepened. "Did he tell you why?"

"No."

"Then I will. Warrington suspected me of having an affair with his wife. The idea's absurd, of course, but the man was insanely jealous. I suppose this is a piece of petty spite."

"Then you can't tell me anything?"

"No more than anyone else can around here, and no doubt you know that. I suppose you're from county headquarters?"

"I came over from there this morning," Roger agreed, realizing that the other had mistaken him for a plainclothes man.

"Well, I'm afraid I've nothing to tell you. Wish I had." The Major began to thaw. "How are you fellows getting on, eh? Got any clues?"

"Not much yet, I'm afraid."

"No. Nasty business. Gives the neighborhood a bad name."

"That's a lovely Madame Jules Bouche," Roger said suddenly. It was one of the few roses he could name and he seized the opportunity eagerly. There is nothing like meeting a man on his own hobby to gain his confidence.

The Major's eye lightened at once. "You a rose-grower? Yes, by jove—" He was off.

Chatting amiably, the two men circled the rose-garden. As they walked, a butterfly, an ordinary cabbage-white, fluttered down and settled in a friendly way on the Major's sleeve. Still chatting, the

Major swooped down on it with cupped hand, held it by one wing, and tore it in two like a scrap of white paper. "Don't often get a chance like that," he said. "Too many of those about this year. They've hardly left me a single lettuce."

At that moment a tall lady appeared in the drawing-room window and called commandingly. The Major's face took on the expression of a small boy who has not washed behind the ears.

"By jove, yes, that reminds me. I promised—yes, well, I'm sorry, Inspector, or whatever you are, but I can't help you. Er, you'll excuse me if—"

"Of course," said Roger, and turned towards the drive. His way took him close enough to the house to afford a good view of a massive lady with a large nose and several determined chins, who appeared capable of dealing adequately with any number of small boys who had omitted to wash behind the ears.

As Roger turned out of the drive into the road again a white butterfly was circling aimlessly above the gate.

"You'd better not go in there, Miss Butterfly," Roger told it. "There's a murderer of your sort about."

But seated again in the Superintendent's little office a couple of hours later, Roger had to confess that his interview with the possible other kind of murderer had been mainly negative. He recounted its progress and admitted the debacle in the end, while the Superintendent shook a sympathetic head.

"He advised me to go and see a Major Cresswell, and I did; but, of course, with no results. The local philanderer, Warrington called him. I gather he was jealous. Well, it's all very difficult, Superintendent. I hardly know what to say."

"Difficult it is, sir, and that's a fact," agreed the Superintendent heartily.

Roger stared at his shoes. It was not often that he found himself unable to make up his mind about a man, but Warrington certainly had him flummoxed. On the surface so genial, so humorous, yet underneath—what? In any case, there was so little to go on. What were Warrington's hobbies? According to his own account, the man had seemed horrified by his wife's infidelity, but what about himself? Was there even another woman?

"Tell me, Superintendent," Roger said suddenly, "what's your opinion of the man? Your own private, personal opinion?"

The Superintendent, who had been ruminating too, roused himself with a jerk. "Eh? What's that? Oh, well, I've always found him a

very pleasant gentleman, speaking personally, but it's true he has got a bit of a reputation for chasing the ladies. Can't hardly leave them alone, they say. But I dare say that's all gossip, too. We get a lot of gossip round here."

"He has, has he?" Roger sat up. "If true, that's important." He considered. "You've never heard whether there's supposed to be a special one, have you?"

"Well, I believe there's been a goodish bit of talk lately about him and Mrs. Colbrook. At any rate, they say his car's been seen standing more than once outside her house. Mrs. Colbrook's a widow—pretty she is, too—and lives in a little house—well, not much more than a cottage it is—out Lampton way, about eight miles from Clearmouth. Right in the country she is, hardly another house in sight. Very convenient, people said."

"That's most interesting, Superintendent."

"But it doesn't help us much with Mrs. Warrington."

"Doesn't it? I'm not so sure." Roger spoke energetically. "Look here, let's try to reconstruct what might have happened, just from our very slight knowledge of the man—assuming, of course, that murder was committed. He's got a corpse on his hands, that's the position. Never mind for the moment how he came to kill her. Well, what's he going to do with it?"

"There's the sea, of course. But somehow I'm not so sure. I don't think I should like to trust the sea myself. Weights can break away. Clothes tear, ropes rot, chains rust. There are plenty of cases in criminal history where the sea has given up its murdered dead too quickly for convenience, and he'd know about all that. No, the sea may have a fifty-fifty chance, but not more. In any case, for our argument we'll eliminate the sea."

"So what else? Did he burn the body piecemeal? Did he try to dissolve it in acid? There'd be some kind of evidence for anything like that. No, he must have hidden it. And that amounts to hiding it in the ground—burying it. Well, where did he bury it?"

"Sounds like a tall order, to work that out."

"It does. But we can get a few pointers at least. We're dealing with a clever man, obviously, in spite of his appearance, and sometimes cleverness itself offers its own clues. We can be sure, for instance, that he didn't bury it in his own garden, or on any piece of ground that could be traced to him. On the other hand—" Roger paused. "On the other hand, the ground must have been familiar to him. We can take it for granted that he did the work at night. Well,

he wouldn't go off into the darkness and just take any piece of land he came to. It would have to be a piece where he could be reasonably sure that the body would remain undiscovered."

"We're fairly close to Dartmoor here," put in the Superintendent.

"Fairly, but not close enough," Roger countered. "He got the job done quickly. It must have been between midnight and four or five A.M. That allows no time to get to Dartmoor and back *and* dig a grave. And knowing our man, we can assume that he dug a real grave, not a shallow hole. How long would that take? Not less than three hours. Probably four. That leaves only an hour or so for the journey. I'd wager Mrs. Warrington's body, if it was buried at all, is within fifteen miles of Clearmouth."

"Maybe," said the Superintendent. "Maybe."

"And what else can we deduce?" Roger went on, with growing enthusiasm. "Why, one thing, surely. Our murderer has all his wits about him. He's not going to dig in hard, stony ground. He's going to choose someplace where the digging's easy. He lives in the country. He knows land, and he knows that easy digging doesn't necessarily follow from a soft surface, or grass or marshy stuff and so on. It means land that's been worked."

"Well, what have we got to date? That the burial spot is a piece of cultivated ground within fifteen miles of Clearmouth, familiar to the murderer. *And*, we can add, where a standing car could be hidden or would arouse no comment from the rustic beholder. Well!" exclaimed Roger, jumping to his feet, "we know of a place that answers all those requirements, don't we? It all depends on one thing. Are the fields surrounding Mrs. Colbrook's cottage put down to pasture this year or are they in corn or roots?"

The Superintendent stared. "Mrs. Colbrook's?" he repeated, in a voice of complete bewilderment.

"Certainly," Roger replied briskly. "It's worth a trial, at any rate. Come along, Superintendent. Get a couple of constables, with spades. We can be there in your car in under an hour."

"But what's Mrs. Colbrook got to do with—"

"Come on, man!" cried Roger, dancing with impatience. "I tell you, I've got a hunch. Don't waste time."

Roger had a way with him. In less than an hour a still bewildered and openly skeptical Superintendent, accompanied by two equally puzzled constables, was surveying with Roger the fields surrounding a solitary cottage that lay a couple of miles off the main road. As the Superintendent had said, not another house was in sight.

"Well, perhaps you'll tell me where we're to begin digging, Mr. Sheringham," said the officer heavily.

Roger, who had not the least idea either, was still convinced that he was on the right track. He threw his eyes over an orderly field of roots lying to their left.

"It's a good farmer who owns this land," he murmured. "Those swedes are planted as straight as an arrow-flight. Except—*except*," Roger said loudly, "for that patch near the center! Of course! That's what he did. He lifted the roots, put them to one side, and replanted them afterwards. Oh, the cunning fellow! But being pressed for time, and rather rattled, and working in the faint dawn, he didn't get rows quite straight. Come along, men. That's our place."

"We must get permission first, Mr. Sheringham," panted the Superintendent.

"Permission nothing," Roger said over his shoulder. "I'll take responsibility. I'll put the first spade in."

Ten minutes later the grins had disappeared from the faces of the two constables. One of them looked up from the work and said: "This ground's been dug over recently, and that's a fact."

Forty minutes later, the mystery of Mrs. Warrington's whereabouts had been solved, very definitely.

The Superintendent did not stint his praises before he left to obtain a warrant for the arrest. "Though how you hit on Major Cresswell instead of Mr. Warrington, sir, still beats me."

Roger looked at him dumbly. "Major Cresswell?" he just managed to repeat.

"Yes. I wondered at the time why you should want to know my opinion of him and seem so interested in the talk about him and Mrs. Colbrook. It was real smart of you, Mr. Sheringham."

Roger said nothing. He had the wit to realize that there had been a misunderstanding: the Superintendent had thought he was still asking about the Major when his mind had progressed to Warrington. In any case, the reasoning had been correct from the data supplied.

"Oh, Major Cresswell, yes," he said rapidly. "You see, I saw his wife. A very determined lady. And the Major very much under her thumb. Just imagine the situation: Mrs. Warrington arrived at midnight, hysterical, demanding to be taken in and this and that. And the Major had only been playing with her. He lost his head, no doubt, when he found he couldn't quieten her. Terrified of his wife hearing. Yes, it's quite easy to reconstruct what happened."

A sudden thought struck him. The case was by no means solved yet. The finding of Mrs. Warrington's body, even in the vicinity of a house occupied by Major Cresswell's mistress, did not necessarily mean that he was the murderer. There was no real evidence to connect him with the crime. Warrington was a clever man. Suppose he had an insane grudge against the Major, and had buried the body here himself to throw suspicion on the man whom he suspected of seducing his wife.

"Wait a minute, Superintendent," he said. "I don't think I should apply for that warrant yet. You see, we've no real evidence that—" He broke off. His eye had caught a white object lying on the ground a few yards away.

He went over and examined it. There were two tiny white scraps, one wedged against a stalk on the ground, the other caught up in the leaves of a plant. Roger picked them up carefully and gave them to the Superintendent.

"You'd better take these. Murderers don't seem able to keep well away, do they?"

The Superintendent looked at the two broken scraps lying in his big palm. "What's this, Mr. Sheringham? A white butterfly?"

"The two halves of one. And," said Roger soberly, "they're going to hang a man."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio 43305.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

a **NEW** short story by

ISAK ROMUN

Two people, a man and a woman, in front of a television set. Something the woman notices in the news provokes astounding, painful memories in the man.

Within several weeks of each other we received two stories with this similar beginning—sharply evocative stories about men looking back in wonder at traumatic happenings in their youth, compelling stories that take sharply different turns. The first, "Death's Gray Land" by Isak Romun, recalls the way we were over thirty-five years ago; the second, "The Beer Bust" by Sean McMartin, the way we were over twenty years ago. What will writers twenty or thirty years from now be creating out of the realities of today, we wonder . . .

DEATH'S GRAY LAND

by ISAK ROMUN

The story, this story, was brought back to me by a chance question from my sister.

"We knew the Kuhns, didn't we? The Erik Kuhns. Didn't they live in the old neighborhood?"

She was reading the *Advance-Indicator* and, I supposed, had seen something in it about the Kuhns. I worked the remote. The TV went silent.

"Yes, they lived a few doors down from us when we were kids. They in the paper?"

She dropped the sheets of newsprint into her lap and scolded, "Oscar Xavier! Why don't you read your own paper?" She made one of her mock-angry faces.

© 1982 by Isak Romun

I asked again, "Are the Kuhns in the paper?"

"He is. His wife passed away a few years back. Now he's dead." She grew thoughtful. "Wasn't there a son? There's nothing here about a son." She frowned. "But I think I remember a son."

Wasn't there a son? I leaned back in my chair and saw the face as I saw it that last time, as ever serene and distant, now whitening, fast matching the crusted snow on which it lay. The eyes were closed. Already discernible was a stiffening, a tightening of the skin as if a fragile ceramic mask had been gentled down upon the features.

I knelt by the body, held one of its hands to my forehead as my other hand traveled the surface of the jacket, stopping at blood-frozen craters dug out by the bullets. And around me in a tight circle—some faces showing concern, others indifference—stood the killers.

"You knew him?" their leader asked.

I nodded mutely and watched my hand—fascinated by it, as if it were independent of body command—while it moved over the mound of rumpled clothes.

"You knew him!"

The words, like pelting shots, shattered the past.

I looked over at my sister, saw her lips moving, heard her voice—excited, relishing discovery. "Yes, you *did* know the son—you wrote a story about him. I remember now, you showed it to me."

I turned up the volume on the TV.

His name was Levi, Levi Kuhn. Seeing his face against the shade of memory, I see two others, their features melding into those of the first. The family Kuhn: son, mother, father. They lived in our mixed-immigrant Paulsburg neighborhood, a neighborhood projecting illusions of comfort amidst realities of shabbiness. We had what we were pleased to call apartments, but which the rent collector called flats.

That was in the mid- to late Thirties. They were among our better years. We were pulling ourselves out of a Depression, our fathers were enjoying satisfactory if not fat pay envelopes, and we, sons and daughters, were busy with the job of growing up—while at the same time readying ourselves, though we may not have known it, for challenges from across the waters.

These were the same waters that brought the Kuhns to our shabby-neat neighborhood. They had gotten the jump on a nighttime knock on their Berlin door and fled across the face of Germany, one

step ahead of heavy jackboots, until they ended up a few doors down from us, the family Monahan.

The son, Levi, was sallow-faced and lean, yet with a softness and serenity that made it hard to get a fix on his features. It was like gazing at an out-of-focus image on a movie screen. To us kids he wasn't "all there," a term applied to what we didn't understand, to persons on the low side of the intelligence scale as well as those on the high. In time I came to know that Levi was among the latter.

I remember little about his mother except that she wrung her hands a good deal and glanced nervously over her shoulder. The father was another matter. He was clearly the leader, the driver of this family. I imagine that but for Erik Kuhn, Elsa Kuhn would be wringing her hands behind barbed-wire while Levi played violin in the camp orchestra.

Erik was a short compact man with a thick short neck supporting a large head. His face seemed hewn rather than formed. His gray hair was close-cropped, standing straight and short like brush bristles. He would stare at you through glistening brown eyes, the eyes of one who, in a glance, can take in the whole of the present while parting the folds of the future. One thing that wasn't in those eyes was the past. Everything about Erik Kuhn bespoke determination—not a busy, get-things-done, gadfly determination but a quiet, studied, confident one.

The sum of this determination was concentrated in one blinding, overriding belief: Levi Kuhn, his son, was a musical genius. I don't know if he *was* a musical genius—I didn't know an awful lot about music then—but Levi was smart, very smart, and not just where music was concerned. He was a good all-around student in things academic. The practical was another story.

I would probably not have gotten to know Levi and the other Kuhns as well as I did except for a number of ostensibly unrelated things. One of these was that Levi and I attended the same school. Another was that I was capable, if not outstanding, in the rough-and-tumble of afterschool brawling, whereas Levi was not. And, finally, there was the curse of the Monahans: we can do wonders with words, but quail at the sight of two plus two.

We came to an agreement. I escorted Levi back and forth to school and to his violin lessons and fended off or beat off the incursions of bullies and their hangers-on who had some irrational, atavistic bias against refugees. In return, Levi pulled me through selected school subjects, particularly math. After a while the relationship rested

less and less on the practical and one day I realized I had made a friend.

Not that Levi was easy to take as a friend. It's hard to be friends with a person who doesn't share your reality. He wasn't unrealistic in the sense that he suspended reality in order to go about his business but in the sense that he was effectively unaware of reality. Except for his music, his school work, his parents, and me, the palpable world around him was treated with relentless indifference. He had no life-coping skills or knowledges. He didn't know what was happening in Europe that would soon sweep us into its maw. It was as if he didn't hear me when I told him I'd become a student stringer for *The Paulsburg Advance-Indicator*—and that hurt!

Considering Erik's single-minded concern for Levi, you might have thought he'd be wary of his son's friendship with a *goy*. He wasn't. He recognized my function and the Kuhn door opened to me anytime I came to fetch Levi or deliver him home.

On these occasions, he would tell me, "Come in and sit a while."

Sitting a while in the Kuhn flat, in the bright and crowded living room, was to be treated to a not altogether subdued exaltation of the genius of the son. While the sound of Levi playing the violin came from his bedroom, Erik circled the room, pointing to and explaining the framed photos of his son hanging on the walls and crowding the fireplace mantel and every other flat surface in the room.

There was Levi at four (at four!) with his first violin, at six with a new teacher, at twelve with a piano accompanist for his first recital. The pictures were all over the room. One day I started to count them and stopped at one hundred and three. I couldn't imagine how they carried all those pictures out of Germany. They must have had just the clothes on their backs, Levi's violin, and suitcases of Levi's pictures.

Around that time I thought self-importantly that I'd write a story about Levi, that my editor might like it.

I never wrote *that* story. I tried several times but couldn't get to "30" (back then, I ended all my pieces that way). Levi was, to be frank, too bland—I couldn't get an angle on him.

Time moved on to the early Forties and Levi and I found ourselves on stage, mortarboards on our heads. At a signal, tassels right! Graduation.

And almost right after that, greetings from the President—

The war had caught up with us.

Erik went to the draft board and tried to get Levi off. He explained his son's gift and pointed out how some years more were needed to bring this gift to fruition.

The appeal failed. The board turned it down on the unarguable grounds that he who seeks asylum on these shores should, like a native born, engage in their defense.

We got different dates on which to report.

"You won't be with him?" Erik asked.

"The Army doesn't work that way, Mr. Kuhn," I told him.

"Yes, yes, but if he's hurt—"

"Levi won't be a hero," I said, remembering the blows I had taken intended for him. Any other father of that period would have been insulted. Not Erik. He was consoled.

"I pray not. I've told him, lie low. That got a lot of fellows through the Kaiser's war. Do what you're told, not more. Come back."

"He will."

"You too, Oscar," he said fervently.

While still in the States I had word of Levi from time to time and was glad when I heard he'd landed a safe assignment in a Special Services orchestra. And I? Some faceless nameless in Army classification stamped my form INFANTRY. I became a dogface.

Everything was white, blindingly white. And yet the scene had the look and quality of gray. This was Bastogne—the Battle of the Bulge.

My division had been rushed up to try to stem the tide of the German breakthrough. Mission not accomplished. Now we were isolated in Bastogne with Jerry all around us.

Bastogne was an intensification of familiar fears: the presence of evil, the existence of enemies, the attendance of death. Each day we suffered the gray uncertainties of the place, experienced a kind of manic joy at end of day that *the* bullet hadn't found us. Happiness there was the reasonable expectation of another minute of life.

I had asked for permission to pass through our lines and received it, though my platoon leader thought I was mad to go alone into the countryside, beyond the reinforced perimeter area to that area of incertitude between it and the enemy. The timing was exceptionally bad. We had heard that Germans dressed in American uniforms and jingling U.S. Army dogtags were roaming this no-man's-land, disrupting our communications, picking off our people, seeking to in-

filtrate our lines. I could be shot by one of our own patrols as well as by a German one. With the reassurance of his uniform taken from him, a soldier will shoot at anything. Questions, if any, come afterward. Nonetheless, I had to be where I was. I was searching for Levi Kuhn.

Levi was here because he was an entertainer—and now he was an infantryman. His orchestra had been playing a dance in Bastogne when the Germans struck and he and his fellow musicians were stranded.

I encountered him first standing guard outside a warehouse. He was wearing an oversized uniform and his helmet hung down below his ears. He probably didn't know how to adjust the straps inside the helmet's liner. I thought about the biting cold and what it was doing to his hands. "Where's the orchestra?" I asked.

He told me it was no more. The musicians were all now on guard duty at warehouses all over Bastogne. He asked if he could get into my unit—he'd feel safer with me, like in school.

His request awoke old feelings. I had never shaken off a sense of responsibility for Levi. But now I had a responsibility to others—the members of my squad. Levi would be a liability. I'd be watching out for him when I should be watching out for them, letting the one penalize the many.

So I answered, "I don't think so, Levi. We do a lot of patrolling. Sometimes some of us don't get back. You're safer where you are."

He looked relieved, as if he hadn't thought of that, and said I was right.

I wasn't. During those days of desperate resistance, in the gray days before relief, the luxury of able-bodied guards could no longer be borne. Besides, there was nothing left in those warehouses to steal. Everyone was on the perimeter or beyond it, on patrol.

His outfit was next to mine, a company in the battalion protecting our flank. After he came up on line I got in the habit of dropping over to see him.

That's how I found out he hadn't come back from a patrol.

He wasn't wounded or killed, as far as the patrol leader knew, but he wasn't around when noses were counted. No, with manpower as short as it was no one was going out after him.

"In a way," the leader said, "I'm glad he's out there."

"Glad! You lose a man and you're glad?"

"Two reasons. He won't have to be spoon-fed any more—looked

after by the others." He nodded at the drab, forlorn figures standing around.

"The other reason?"

"It may be better for him if he's been taken prisoner. He couldn't of lasted much longer with us. He just wasn't all *there*. I never knew when I told him something if I was getting through."

And so I had gotten the map coordinates of where he was last seen and here I was. But where was Levi?

Above me the sky appeared more overcast than when I started out, throwing its pall of gray over the white landscape. I was on the edge of a large clearing surrounded by dense, dark woodland. The visual aspect of peace here was dramatic in a world of chattering small arms, thudding mortars, and crashing artillery. On all sides were the noises of a hundred small engagements, a hundred killing actions—the hell-born roar of war ascending to a horrid sublimity.

Occasionally I'd see a group pass through the trees or along the edge of the clearing and pull myself back. I wasn't about to hail any patrols or respond to snatches of conversation carried to me on the breeze. But I listened carefully, straining to hear too-perfect English, the occasional Britishism that would reveal the patrol as German.

To my left I could hear, uncomfortably close, the strangled clacking of a machinegun. I moved to my right in time to feel the concussive wave of nearby exploding artillery, its incoming whisper lost in the sound of the machinegun. The force of the explosion knocked me down, but I was unhurt. I jumped up and ran as fast as I could in the knee-deep snow. That round might have been the first of many.

After a while I came upon what might have been the round's target, a hasty machinegun emplacement. A job had been done on this weapon and its servers, and not by artillery. In the emplacement were three riddled bodies dressed in American uniforms. Footprints were all around the site.

As I bent down to look, a hard voice came out of nearby trees. "Hold it right there, whoever you are!"

I froze, but called back over my shoulder, "Sergeant Monahan, first platoon, Baker Company, 501st."

"Monahan?" The voice softened. "Old Oscar?"

I rose slowly and turned as slowly, my arms outstretched. I held my M1 by its muzzle, my fingers far away from the trigger.

"Relax, Sarge." I recognized the speaker, a corporal from another

platoon in Baker. I dropped my arms and slung the rifle. He approached me, retrieving the gun as he came.

"What have we got here, Chasrow?" I asked him.

The corporal gestured toward the three bodies. "G.I. Krauts."

"You sure?"

"We got the idea when they fired on us. We identified ourselves. A mistake—they fired faster. We called in artillery, but they hit everywhere else. We finally took them ourselves."

I looked at the bodies. "Did you try to take them alive? For the intelligence boys?"

"Only way to put out a machinegun is to put out its crew. We got one alive, though, before he broke for it. He's dead now."

We were walking back over to the clump of trees as the corporal talked. There was a small open space in the trees and here the rest of the patrol was gathered in a tight little circle.

"There he is," Chasrow said.

I looked down and saw Levi Kuhn. The body of Levi Kuhn.

"He talked like a German, acted like a German," Chasrow was saying. "And he didn't know anything Stateside. Who's the National League champs? Blank. How many rounds did Louis take to floor Schmeling? Blank. He didn't even know Roosevelt got a fourth term."

"Those things didn't matter to him," I explained. "And he *was* a German, a German Jew, a refugee. He was probably a prisoner of the guys you killed."

"Why'd he break for it?"

"He was used to running."

"He could of *acted* like an American."

"No, he couldn't." I looked down at the body. "I should report this."

One of the patrol, I didn't see which one, worked the bolt on his rifle. The dry metallic sound hung in the air, a dark resonance.

"Put it down," Chasrow ordered without turning around. Then he asked me, "What can we do?"

I looked through the lattice of tree limbs to the machinegun and its silent servers. "Are you sure they're Germans?"

"One of them had his real ID sewed inside his jacket."

What happened to Levi that day was the kind of thing that happened with greater frequency than records show—tragic errors of judgment, acts countenanced in silence. But once that silence was

broken, the acts were harshly punished. I looked at Chasrow. He was a good man, a seasoned fighter with a lot more patrols in him.

"Why're you interested in that machinegun, Monahan?"

"Because I have a bargain to make with you. And it'll take your ass out of the sling you put it in."

The bargain was this. Corporal Chasrow recommended Private Levi Kuhn for a D.S.C. for single-handedly taking the enemy machinegun nest and, in the process, sacrificing his life. I, for my part, kept my mouth shut. I thought I did what I did for Erik and Elsa Kuhn—to give their son's death some meaning, rescue it from the gray meanness of so many others.

The recommendation went through, although it was knocked down to a Silver Star by some brass up the chain of command. The decoration was awarded posthumously and, presumably, when Bastogne was relieved it was sent to the Kuhns.

After Patton and his tanks worked their way into Bastogne, I was evacuated to a rear-base hospital. There, some frostbitten toes of mine received more attention than the whole of me had received in all my time in the Army. When I got to a typewriter, I wrote a tear-dabbing, all-stops-out story on Levi's fictitious exploit and sent it, by way of military censor, to the *Advance-Indicator*. By return mail I received a tearsheet of the paper's front page with my bylined story on it and a note telling me a check awaited at home.

It was dark, but not black. Grayish. The drapes were drawn, the sun creeping in at the sides and through thin spots in the fabric. I could barely make out the faces of the two people opposite me.

I had been invited in, had been seated, had refused refreshments, and then—silence.

At last I said, "Did you read my article on Levi?"

"We read it, yes," Erik answered. I couldn't be sure, but I think Elsa nodded.

"He was a hero," I offered.

"Tell me, Oscar, how are you? Your parents? Your new job?"

Though I knew Erik wasn't really interested, I talked of myself, my family, and my new job for about ten minutes, and then we fell into another silence. I remember wishing I had waited a little longer before visiting. I took about fifteen minutes more of this—silence broken by little dabs of talk—then I said, "I've got to go. My editor already has me on a beat."

"Yes, yes, we understand," Erik responded and stood up.

I went to the door. There was a small unlit foyer separating the door from the living-room entrance. When I opened the door, the light from the hall outside stole through the foyer and into the living room, bringing the room and its objects into soft relief.

"The pictures, Mr. Kuhn—"

All those pictures of Levi perilously smuggled out of Germany, that history of a human being, all were precisely where they had always been—the difference now was that those on the walls were turned to the walls, those on the tables and other surfaces were turned face down.

From the living room, Mrs. Kuhn was holding out her hands in a gesture of surrender or of supplication.

"I can never forgive him," Erik said harshly.

I looked at him and saw that what I had thought was grief was fury—cold, directed fury. His eyes were red and staring, the look of a failed predator. Suddenly all the world had a ghastly, fecal odor.

"He could have run, he could have hidden, he could have made himself sick," he went on. "I can forgive a coward who dies trying to protect his gift of life. Not a *hero*"—there was disgust in his voice as he pronounced the word—"not a *hero* who throws that gift away to make—what do you Americans say?—the grandstand play."

I thought of blowing the whole thing, of telling him the truth then and there. But he wouldn't have believed me. He would have said I was still protecting Levi.

So all I said was, "Mr. Kuhn, in Bastogne we counted cooks and clerks among the perimeter dead. Everybody had to fight."

Erik pushed me, none too gently, through the door. In the hall he talked in a vehement whisper. "You're a good boy, Oscar, but I don't want to see you again. I would have to think and talk of him. I don't want to do that for the rest of my life. He's a stranger to me, a foolish stranger."

He went back into the flat, quietly closing the door.

In time I put Levi out of my mind. Until my sister's remarks brought him back.

She was still talking, above the noise of the TV. "Why, you got the job you have now on the paper because of that story. That was a very good story, Oscar."

She said something else, but I didn't hear what it was. I didn't hear the TV either. I was remembering poor Levi Kuhn and the lines Siegfried Sassoon wrote:

"Soldiers are citizens of death's gray land,
Drawing no dividends from time's tomorrows."

I had never before—not even in Bastogne—felt the fear and loneliness hiding in those lines that I did the last time I saw the Kuhns.

Every soldier traverses death's gray land in the heat and madness of war, sacrificing his identity, becoming an anonymity to be wiped from the slate of life by an indifferent sweep of hostile fire. Every soldier knows and half expects this—but on the battlefield, not in the warmth and sanity of his parents' living room.



Even without Matt Toomey's death, July 15, 1960 would have been set aside from ordinary days. It was May McGuire's thirteenth birthday, Sophie Pfortman came home from Rockland State Hospital for the first time in nearly a year, and the Ingrahams threw that awful beer bust.

Sean McMartin's stories have appeared in a wide variety of magazines. A story he published in the South Dakota Review was selected for the Roll of Honor in Martha Foley's Best American Short Stories of 1969, another he published in the Colorado Quarterly was selected as a Distinctive Story in the Foley collection of 1972, and a third story, in Quartet, was chosen for the annual's 1976 Roll of Honor . . .

THE BEER BUST

by **SEAN McMARTIN**

John Laverty sprawled on the sofa like a carelessly tossed suit. Alongside him, her posture more dignified, his wife skimmed a newspaper. The Nine O'Clock Newsbreak was on TV. John barely noticed the orange-and-black swirl of the daily fire. TV news stories were chosen strictly for color values, by cameramen.

Their daughter, Mary Kate, was by now giggling and shrieking at a pajama party for ten-year-olds two houses down and they had one of their rare evenings alone. A homicide dick in one of the most murderous cities in the world had little enough of the simple pleasures and John welcomed the opportunity to wind down, think as little as possible, and just plain enjoy.

His wife suddenly gasped and dropped the paper. "John, that's *our* house!"

He caught the tail-end of the reporter's overvoice "—Park Avenue and One Hundred Seventy-eighth Street."

The tenement on the right of the driveway to what had been O'Day's Garage was ribboned with flames, smoke, and a snakepit of streaming fire hoses. The picture shifted to the top floor rear

© 1982 by Sean McMartin

where a fire-escape stood out like the skeleton of a prehistoric monster. There was a gnawing pain in John's chest.

They had lived for years now in a split-level on Long Island and The Bronx had been left behind forever. But it *had* been their house. God! The mind was a con artist, fragmenting and hiding memories in a thousand scattered pockets, making you believe they would die in peace. Then a word, an odor, a picture . . .

Even without Matt Toomey's death, July 15, 1960 would have been set aside from ordinary days. It was May McGuire's thirteenth birthday, Sophie Pfortman came home from Rockland State Hospital for the first time in nearly a year, and the Ingrahams threw that awful beer bust.

It had drizzled all day, but at five o'clock the sun had burned through. John went barreling up to the roof where Matt Toomey, his Aunt Florrie's husband, would be working his pigeons. There were ten of them, males and females, homers and racers, and Matt couldn't tell the difference between them by sex or function. He flew them at nine in the morning, put them back in their cage, flew them again at five, then fed them at nine o'clock before he went to work.

Matt had claimed squatter's rights to the birds when the Pugliasis moved to New Jersey about a month ago and left them behind. People had been complaining for years about the filthy things to the Department of Health, the police, even their Congressmen, but nothing happened. There they were, about twenty feet up in a tight group, looking like a dirty, motheaten tablecloth, Matt under them waving a long bamboo pole.

Matt Toomey stood about six three, lank and loose, with wavy red hair and blue eyes. You took Burt Lancaster, gave him the hell-with-rules personality of Errol Flynn and the voice of Dennis Day, and you had Matt Toomey. Most of the men tenants didn't like him—probably jealous of his good looks—but with John he was aces wired. Right now Matt was in his work clothes, a denim shirt and skin-tight blue jeans. Even climbing telephone poles for Ma Bell he tried to look sharp.

The pigeons sailed a right oblique out over Park, across Webster, up 178th and back, dropping on the roof (no one dared hang wash up there any more) and cooing until finally Matt got tired of waving the pole and coaxed them back into their cage.

"Hey, man, you going to the party tonight?" John yelled.

"Yeah. I can't stay too long, though—I'm still on the lousy night

shift. Hey, y'think somebody'll ask me to sing a few bars?" He threw back his head, closed his eyes, and sang in that sweet Irish tenor, "On a clear day, on that clear day, you can see forever and ever and evermore." He dropped his chin to his chest and shot his blue eyes up at John in that mannerism of his. "Was it with his mouth 'e bit 'oo?" Then, slyly, "Dolly Dimples'll probably be there."

John could feel the blush wash over his face.

"Hell she will. It's her birthday. The McGuires will throw their own party."

"Nah," Matt said in disgust. "Mike McGuire? That self-centered sonofabitch don't even know May's alive."

"Neither do I," John said flatly.

Matt looked at him in mock sorrow, put his fingertips to his temples, and closed his eyes. "Us Irish are psychic, y'know. I see John Armand Lavery marrying May McGuire and having five kids."

"She's gonna be a nun," John yelled, his face flaming by now.

Matt sneered. "That's her old man's cockamamey idea. Won't happen if you get the lead out."

John turned and ran down the steps, Matt's laughter following him like the tail of a kite. Why the hell did people keep shoving May McGuire at him?

The party was to begin after supper. John was going not because he wanted to but because his mother said he would—there would be lots of kids his age there. Oh, sure, and so would the Pope. The Ingrahams lived on the top floor rear next to the McGuires. The Pfortmans and the Weiners lived in front. A real United Nations, the top floor. They started up the three flights after a lecture by his mother to him and his father on how to behave.

Hugo Pfortman was out on the tiny landing like a doorman. He stood about five feet five, most of which was hair. It sprouted from his head like a lion's mane and continued into a ferocious moustache. Old Pfortman was about as ferocious as the lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. He had to be in his forties but in his younger days he had been a Greco-Roman wrestler. A 16x20 picture in his living room showed him in the dark underwear of the Stuttgart *Turnverein*, mouthless under the huge moustache, mad-eyed, longing to clamp a headlock on someone. Now he was nothing but a cabinet-maker with a little shop on Tremont and Third Avenues.

"You the bouncer, Hug?" John's father asked.

Mr. Pfortman looked confused, then he caught on and laughed.

"Excuse me. I think sometimes in German. Bouncer, *ja, ja*. That's a good one, Sam. You want I should bounce you once?"

"No, thanks," his father said, knowing blamed well Pfortman still could.

"How is Sophie?" his mother asked. "She here?"

"Sophie is good, Emily," Mr. Pfortman said. "I keep her home, she gets some rest, *ja*?"

And maybe get in a little praying, *ja*? Sophie Pfortman was a religious nut. Their apartment walls were filled with pictures of the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Mother, the Infant of Prague, and one—believe it or not—of Martin Luther, which was like betting on every horse in the race.

As they walked in, the host and hostess ran up to greet them as though they were honored guests. They could have been brother and sister, the Ingrahams, both tall and thin, light-eyed, with pouty mouths and pale complexions. Julie Ingraham wore too much make-up and enough cheap jewelry to stock a flea market.

Compared to the Lavertys', the Ingraham apartment was as homey as a subway platform—no pictures on the walls, drab curtains on the windows, yellowing shades, beat-up old furniture. In the kitchen, which was next after the bathroom off the hall, a keg of beer stood on the sink drainboard. Big Frank Shea, Aunt Carrie's husband, and Mike McGuire, a Mutt and Jeff team of cops, headed the male guard of honor around it.

Frank wore a loud yellow-and-green striped shirt, the usual cigar clamped in his red face. Mike McGuire wore a rumpled brown suit and on his stubby feet the black square-toed shoes of a beat cop. The gun on his right side bulged like the beginning of a pot belly. He had slanty rain-colored eyes and lips pressed together so you couldn't tell whether he was going to spit or smile. He was a sergeant (and don't you forget it) and an honor cop. On Labor Day in 1946 he had taken three bullets in the gut breaking up a saloon holdup and spent almost three months in the hospital hanging between life and death. He always looked like God had picked the wrong ending.

John's father headed straight for the beer. "Not a cent in the house," Frank Shea roared, "and the baby crying for whiskey."

"Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer?" John's father roared back in his half of the old ritual.

"Sam," his mother said warningly. "Sam, remember."

His father held up his right hand and said, "Just a couple, Em. I may drop."

John approached Frank. "Hey, Frankie Frisch!" Frisch had been Frank Shea's idol. He even looked a little like the old Fordham Flash.

"Hey, Mickey Mantle," Frank yelled back.

McGuire gave John a sour look. Nothing personal, everybody got the same.

John walked down the hall. The furniture in the dining and living rooms had been shoved against the walls to make room for dancing. The radio was playing "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich, and You" and the Alfieris and the Noonans were stumbling around to it in the middle of the living room.

One quick glance told John that, just as he'd expected, there were no guys his age there—unless you counted a creep like Moonie Quinn. May McGuire was in a corner by herself. She was a redhead like her mother but taller and slimmer, with eyes that could be green or blue depending on her mood. And those dimples—man! When they were in the first grade at St. Joseph's his mother had nicknamed May "Dolly Dimples." One day, just for devilment, she fixed it with Sister Ignatius to put them in the same double seat. May whispered to him, "John, when we grow up I'm going to marry you." He ran out of class, almost out of The Bronx, hating them all, swearing he'd turn Protestant just to spite them.

May had spotted him. She walked toward him, smiling and dimpling. Thirteen was the age of shivaree, bushwhacking couples making love in the bushes at Echo Park, yelling "Cop scram" into the ladies dressing-rooms in the department stores, doing anything that was sideways. John crossed his eyes at her and twisted his face like silly-putty. Her smile turned into a giggle.

"Isn't this a nice party, John?"

"Parties stink."

The smile widened. Her eyes were blue.

A voice rang out from behind them, "A cup of coffee, a sandwich, and you-oo, a cozy corner, a table for two-oo." Matt Toomey danced into the living room like an Irish step-dancer, arms stiff at his sides. He wore his best suit, a grey glen-plaid, shiny black shoes, a pale-blue shirt open at the neck, and a wicked smile on his face. "A chance to whisper and cuddle and coo-oo."

Everybody, especially the women, applauded. Matt bowed, dropped his chin to his chest, shot those eyes up and said to John, "Was it with his mouth 'e bit 'oo?" He shoved him toward May. "Whyn't you two dance?"

"Like hell," John said and dashed back into the kitchen.

His folks were still there, his mother keeping an eye on his father and the keg. Matt followed him in.

"You hurt the young lady's feelings," he said with a scowl. "Don't you know how to be a gentleman?"

"What for?"

"What young lady was that?" his mother asked.

"May McGuire," Matt said.

"Sister Michael Rosemary," John corrected as belligerently as he could.

His mother flashed him a look. "Where's Rosemary, by the way?" she asked. "She here?"

"Rosemary isn't feeling well," Mike McGuire said from behind his beer.

"Oh, what a pity," John's mother said, nodding her head in re-
quiem.

It was a game. Rosemary McGuire, a sneaky drinker, was probably squiffed. Everybody knew the story and McGuire knew everybody knew it, but he would shoot dead anybody who said it out loud. A proud man, Mike McGuire.

Matt polished off a quick beer, grabbed John's mother's hand and said, "Come on, Emily, let's you and me trip the light fantastic."

Sam Lavery gave them a startled look, opened his mouth, said nothing, then poured himself another beer. John drifted back into the living room. May McGuire, thank God, was talking to Debbie Weiner and Harriet Sender. The Weiners and the Senders, the only Jews there, formed a separate group just inside the door. That's the way it was at any kind of gathering, people stuck together according to their nationalities. Aunt Florrie and Aunt Carrie were over in a corner. His mother, when she was finished dancing, would join them. Three French girls, married to three Irishmen. One thing everybody was united on was the "Porta Rikkens." As usual, most of the talk around the room was about how they were sneaking up from the South Bronx so fast pretty soon they would take over the place.

Mr. Weiner winked at John. John winked back. Mr. Weiner, one of his favorite people, was a chunky little guy with a cap of pewter-colored hair and a face so lined it looked like an old oil painting of somebody's ancestor. He was a "maven," someone who acted as a broker in all fields of merchandise. You wanted a suit, furniture, jewelry, china, whatever, Mr. Weiner would take you down to East

Broadway or Houston Street in Lower Manhattan—you would pick, he would underwrite the sale, and you would pay him five dollars or so a week until the debt was paid off. Some people—Matt Toomey for one—piled up big debts and never did pay off.

The apartment was getting stinking hot. People fanned themselves with handkerchiefs. Frank Shea stomped in from the kitchen, his big ugly service-revolver in his hand, yelling, "Cheese it, the cops." The men roared, the women shrieked, and Mike McGuire yelled across the room at him to put the Gee-Dee thing away before he took it away from him.

John sneaked into the bedroom and out onto the fire escape. There was no light in the McGuires' bedroom, which also led onto the fire escape. There was nothing to see but O'Day's Garage, which was closed for the night, and the topmost point of St. Joseph's steeple but even that was better than the party. He wished he was out bushwhacking in Echo Park with the other guys.

He wasn't there very long when somebody came into the bedroom. The curtain on the single window was a piece of dark-red cloth through which you could see only outlines. The figure lit a cigarette. Julie Ingraham. Maybe a minute later somebody else came in.

Julie Ingraham said in a loud whisper, "Matt, f'God sakes, somebody might come in."

Matt Toomey!

"Julie," he said. "I'm hotter'n a two-dollar pistol. Let's go out on the fire escape, nobody'll see us."

John felt sick. *Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery*. You couldn't even think it or you would burn in Hell. The ceiling light went on. John peeked through the side of the curtain. Freddie Ingraham stood at the door.

"We got company," he snapped. "Get the deuced outside where you belong."

Julie scooted out. Ingraham gave Matt a long, dirty look, then followed his wife out. Matt switched off the light. John wasn't sure whether he had left the room. He stayed where he was until he could work up the nerve to crawl back through the window.

The crowd outside suddenly started singing, "Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday, May McGuire, Happy Birthday to you." You could have heard them on Tremont Avenue. The clock on St. Joe's bonged nine deep notes. Holy Smoke! Matt was probably up feeding the pigeons. John stood and scrambled up

the ladder to the roof. The pigeons were making a racket for their food. The party below got noisier and noisier.

He stayed until St. Joe's clock bonged once for nine-thirty. Still no Matt. He went back the same way he came.

His mother grabbed his arm in a grip like a pair of pliers. Where on earth had he been? His father had gone back downstairs half an hour ago with an upset stomach.

Someone yelled from the kitchen, "You lousy tramp!"

Two seconds later there was a sound like a meat cleaver flattening a piece of round steak, then a banshee yell. Mr. Pfortman, looking like The Cowardly Lion, galloped into the kitchen. John ran right behind him. His mother, yelling for him to come back here, made a close third. Julie Ingraham, bawling and drooling spit, pressed both hands to her left eye. Mr. Pfortman held a struggling Freddie Ingraham in his arms like he was going to slam him to the mat in a flying mare. Julie Ingraham took her hands away from her eye.

"I'm blind!" she screamed. "Oh, my God, I'm blind!"

His mother dragged John out in three giant steps. She said nothing about what had just gone on in the kitchen but she would tomorrow. It would be like a catechism lesson, full of don'ts and if-you-dos.

He usually went to sleep like somebody falling off a table but not tonight. He could still hear Matt and Julie Ingraham. *Adultery*. As bad as murder. He hated Matt.

Eventually he fell asleep. He dreamed of people yelling and when he woke up they were still yelling. His mother swept down the hall past his room, her face grey as dishwater. "What's the matter, Mom?"

She turned, stared at him, then said very slowly, "Matt Toomey is dead."

All he could feel was numbness. Time stood still. Later, from the front window, he watched an ambulance pull up in front of the building. Three men got out, one of them carrying a stretcher, another a black bag. They came back about ten minutes later with a body in a black covering strapped to the stretcher.

Later that morning two detectives came, talked first to Mike McGuire, then to the tenants in all the surrounding buildings. Nobody had seen or heard a thing. The detectives looked bored, jotted down some stuff in their notebooks, and left.

It was night before John learned what had happened. When Matt hadn't come home from work that morning like he was supposed to, Aunt Florrie had called his boss. He had told her Matt hadn't shown

up for work. Something made her look out the window. A body in a grey suit lay close to the wall. She ran down, praying to beat the band, but sure enough it was Matt.

A few days later the findings of the Medical Examiner came out. Matthew Toomey, a well nourished male Caucasian, had died of a fractured skull and a broken neck, either of which could have killed him, sometime between the hours of eight and ten on the evening of July 15, 1960. The police report stated that there had been no signs of foul play. According to Toomey's wife, it was the victim's custom to feed his pigeons at nine o'clock. That fact, plus the quantity of alcohol in his system, led to the conclusion that Toomey's death, resulting from a fall off the roof, was accidental.

John remembered what he had been thinking the other night. *Adultery. You would burn in Hell.* Had he, in some way, wished Matt into Hell? He would never quite rid himself of that thought. His mind fragmented the whole night into small pieces and hid them in a thousand, scattered pockets.

John looked over at his wife. *I see John Armand Laverty marrying May McGuire . . .*

You weren't psychic enough, Matt . . .

He began to face facts he hadn't been able or willing to those years before, facts as clear and sharp as ice. Matt had been wearing that snazzy suit of his when Aunt Florrie found his body. No way would a dude like Matt have gone up to the roof in that suit. He wasn't drunk either. He could handle a lot more hard liquor than the few beers he had had that night. No. Somebody had murdered him. John had been up on the roof for half an hour. *Your father went downstairs half an hour ago.*

"I feel as though someone just burned the photo albums with all the old family pictures," May said in a small voice.

"I think he was murdered, May," John said.

Her chin was on her chest. Without moving it she raised her eyes and looked up at him.

Was it with his mouth 'e bit 'oo?

His guts were full of ice cubes. No—*Hell*—it wasn't really the same mannerism. But he couldn't let go of it. Red hair, blue eyes—like her mother, okay. But tall, willowy? Her parents were both short.

"Who?" she said.

The bedroom windows from *two* apartments opened onto the fire escape on the top floor rear.

"Who was murdered, John?"

"Matt Toomey."

He juggled dates, counted backward. She had been born on July 15, 1947. She would have had to have been conceived sometime in October 1946, assuming she had been full term and he had never heard it said that she had been premature. But from Labor Day until early December 1946 Mike McGuire had been in the hospital fighting for his life.

"Okay, Sherlock, who murdered him?"

Mike McGuire could count backward, too, but being proud as Lucifer he could never make an issue of it. He had screamed inside for thirteen years. *That self-centered sonofabitch don't even know May's alive.* Proud, maybe, but nobody's fool, McGuire had suspected what was going down that night, used the fire escape to enter his own bedroom, and caught Matt and Rosemary together. There had been no signs of foul play. Nobody had heard a thing. All McGuire had had to do was hit Matt over the head—maybe with that big service revolver of his—throw him off the fire escape, then lead his precinct buddies to the conclusion that Matt had fallen off the roof in a drunken stupor. Rosemary McGuire, before she died ten years ago of cirrhosis of the liver, had had a memory to drown.

Educated guesses? Sure, but he was cop enough to know that he was in the right theater, in the right seat, and the scenario was A-okay. Only it wouldn't play. He couldn't prove a damned thing. Captain Mike McGuire, Precinct Commander and charter member of the saintly Emerald Society, would hang him up to twist slowly in the wind.

And May must never know.

All right, you slanty-eyed bastard, you got even.

"Will you come back to earth," May said in exasperation. "Who murdered your uncle?"

He tried to grin, never made it.

"The Puerto Ricans," he said. "The F.A.L.N. wanted his pigeons." She threw the paper at him.

"Q"

a **NEW** short story by

STEPHEN WASYLYK

Liethgow Katzenbacher had been an importer, a true entrepreneur. His ideas had resulted in some astonishing sales figures. The small morocco-covered box he kept on his desk, he'd told everyone, held the secret of his success . . .

THE KATZENBACHER PRINCIPLE

by **STEPHEN WASYLYK**

When it comes to buying useless items at auctions, flea markets, garage sales, and other methods in vogue for disposing of unwanted possessions, my wife Irene is the undisputed champion of the world.

We have, at last inventory, seventeen non-working lamps, several hundred books that will never be read, three expired grandfather clocks, a plaster bust of an unknown Indian with a chipped nose, dozens of paintings by obscure artists, and hundreds of other items which would require the full-time services of a cataloger and an assistant—not only to identify and classify but merely to find.

Slowly but surely the spare bedroom has acquired the appearance of a memorabilia warehouse.

Many of our friends wonder why I put up with the gradual transformation of what once was a charming, beautifully furnished room into a junkshop. The answer is simple. Collecting these objects is her only fault. Finding someone whose virtues outweigh their vices is an accomplishment to begin with. Finding someone who has only one vice to go with many virtues is rare.

Furthermore, through some method of reasoning which is beyond

© 1982 by Stephen Wasylyk.

me she considers all this junk as her security against the day when I depart for my well-earned rest at the Last Repose Cemetery, even though she is more than adequately protected by my insurance.

"Do you know how much all this is worth?" she demanded when I pointed out that the cardboard cartons in the spare bedroom were in danger of toppling over.

"I have no idea," I admitted, "except that it will probably cost a fortune to have hauled away."

"I figure it's worth several thousand dollars."

"Remarkable," I said, "considering that your total investment is somewhere in the neighborhood of seven hundred dollars and twenty-nine cents. Such talent is in great demand on Wall Street. I suggest you give this up and apply for a broker's license. Or better yet, write a book telling people how they can get rich by buying junk. Publishers love books that promise readers instant wealth, painless weight reduction, or immortality. In addition to the royalties, you can profit by selling this stuff to purchasers to give them a start. A premium offer. They buy the book and get something useless as a bonus to start their collection."

"You're laughing at me," she said darkly.

"Not me. You know I never laugh at you. Did I laugh when you brought home the priceless glass butterfly with the broken wing? Or the little Super French Fry Potato Cutter that almost left you with nine fingers? You know I don't laugh at you. I may guffaw, but I never laugh."

"You'll see. Someday you'll thank me for collecting these things. Nostalgia has always been big."

"I can't recall a time when nostalgia wasn't big but that never prevented people from disposing of junk."

Her lips tightened. "Stop calling it junk."

"Okay, if you stop buying."

She grabbed her coat off the old hatrack and jammed her arms into it.

"After twenty-five years, you're going home to mother," I said.

She smiled sweetly. "Am I crazy? I have a good thing going here. You make the money and I spend it. Like now. There's an auction in Mount Olive and I'd better hurry or all the good things will be gone."

"Take your time. If you're not home by five I'd consider it an honor and a privilege to prepare dinner with one of the thirty-seven different types of can openers you've collected . . ."

When she arrived home at dusk I expected the station wagon to be loaded, but she walked in carrying only one small object. Holding it high over her head she gave a little cheer.

"I got it!"

"You got what?"

She held out a small box about five-by-eight inches and three inches deep, covered with a fine morocco leather with elaborate gold tooling around the edges. It had a small hasp of either brass or gold. I tried to open it without success. "I hope they sold you the key that goes with it."

"No. There *is* no key. That's why I got it so cheaply."

"How cheaply?"

"Fifty dollars."

"You paid fifty dollars for a box you can't open?"

"I was sure you'd find a way."

"What's in it?"

"No one knows. How can they, since it can't be opened?"

"Tell me," I said carefully, "did anyone else bid on this valuable item?"

"Several people, including the nephew of the man who owned it."

"I suspected it but now I'm certain. You're not the only nut in the world."

"Listen, the nephew came to me afterward and offered me a hundred dollars."

"If he had a hundred dollars, why didn't he bid the price up and freeze you out?"

"Aha!" she said triumphantly. "Experience pays! I always take plenty of money because most auctioneers will accept only cash or a certified check. He didn't know that. Afterward he wanted to give me his personal check, but if the auctioneer wouldn't trust him why should I?"

"A worthy thought everyone should hold dear. Did he tell you why he wanted the box?"

"Sentimental value."

I turned the box over in my hands. "Sure. Sentimental value. Why would the others want it?"

"The same reason I did, I suppose. It's an interesting object."

"But no one was willing to part with more than fifty dollars."

"Only because they all lacked a sense of the value of the unique."

"One thing they didn't lack was common sense."

The doorbell chimed. I opened the door. A young man with a bushy

head of brown hair, a thin face, and a prominent Adam's apple stood there, a little breathless and wearing a rumpled suit no designer would put his name to.

He bared his teeth in a nervous smile. "Hi. I'd like to talk to your wife if you don't mind."

"I don't mind, since I'll be monitoring the conversation. Come in."

Irene pointed. "It's him. The man's nephew. The one who wanted to buy the box."

"I still do," he said. "I can understand your reluctance to accept a check from someone you don't know so this time I brought cash." He pulled out a wad of bills that were still bank-banded. "I'll give you two hundred dollars for the box."

"No," she said.

I glared at her before asking him: "Why do you want the box so much? And don't tell me it's for sentimental reasons."

"Really, that's all it is. I was raised by my uncle and I used to play with that box as a young boy when I visited his office. He'd never tell me how to open it, but he did promise to leave it to me in his will. I always looked forward to that day, but I suppose it slipped his mind. After all, with more than a million dollars to dispose of it would be hard to remember one little box. I explained his promise to the attorney handling the estate, but he didn't seem to care. Since it wasn't specifically mentioned as a bequest, he said, it had to be sold at auction with the residue of the estate. He's a stickler for following the letter of the law. I thought it would be easy enough to buy it at the auction, but your wife outbid me because I didn't have enough cash." He held up the money. "I do now."

I glanced at Irene. She shook her head. "The auction is over," I told him. "All bids are closed."

"Listen," he began, a note of desperation in his voice.

I smiled. "We haven't introduced ourselves, have we?" I held out my hand. "My name is Del Mooncastle and this is my wife Irene."

He ignored my hand. "Claiborne Beamer. Would five hundred dollars interest you?"

"No," said Irene.

He passed a shaking hand over his face. "Please, Mrs. Mooncastle. You don't understand. I must have that box."

"Perhaps I'll will it to you as your uncle should have done," she said sweetly.

The nervousness disappeared and his teeth bared like those of an animal backed into a corner. "I hate people like you," he said slowly.

"To you the box means nothing. It means a great deal to me, yet out of sheer selfishness you refuse my offer, even though you know it's far more than the box is worth. All right, since that's the way you choose to act you alone are responsible for the consequences."

"Hold it," I snapped. "Is that a threat?"

"I didn't create the situation. You did."

He spun on his heel and left. Out on the sidewalk he paused to glare at a woman looking up at the house, then he climbed into a Chevrolet and drove away.

Hips swaying, the woman made her way up the walk. She was as thin as he was but the similarity ended there. While he appeared to have slept in his clothes she was a picture of tailored neatness in her blue blazer, white blouse, and tan skirt.

"Hello there," she said cheerily when we answered her ring. "I see you met C.B. Not very impressive, is he?" She held out her hand to me. "I'm Angora Fairchild and I'm here to talk business with your wife."

"Don't tell me you're interested in that box, too. What's your excuse for not buying it at the auction?"

"I simply didn't get there in time," she said ruefully. "I was delayed in a traffic jam."

"One of the hazards of modern living. All you can do is square your shoulders and face the world again in spite of your disappointment. The box is not for sale."

She laughed. "At one time I might have been inclined to accept that, but since I graduated from my assertiveness-training course with honors I don't give up easily. Would you believe that at one time I held myself in low self-esteem and had a hypersensitivity to certain social circumstances? But I've developed my social skills to the point where I now get what I want because I have fulfilled myself as a person."

I was already irritated because Irene had spent fifty dollars on a box without a key and then turned down a quick profit of four hundred and fifty dollars. Now the Fairchild woman sounded as though she was confident she could talk a dummy like me into anything.

"Good for you," I said, "but unfortunately I once took the college course that predated assertiveness-training. It was called Basic Rudeness. The box isn't for sale. Get lost."

I closed the door in her face.

"Listen, you crumb bum!" she shrilled. "I worked for that man for

twenty years and the only thing that kept me there was the hope that someday I'd get that box! He promised it to me and I mean to have it!"

"What's she screaming about?" asked Irene.

"Her social skills collapsed under stress," I said.

A minute or two later the doorbell chimed again. I took a deep breath, ready to pick up the battle with Miss Fairchild, but a man stood there. He was short and swarthy, with straight black hair and black eyes. He spoke with a soft accent.

"My name is Hari Pakar and I have come to buy the box. You have only to name your price." Somehow the combination of the black eyes and the sibilant voice made him menacing.

I peered beyond him. "How many more of you nuts are out there?"

"Indeed I am not as you say, nuts, and neither are the others. The box is very perilous, sir, and it should not be in the wrong hands. Therefore, if I buy it from you I would only be doing you a favor."

"I appreciate your concern, but the box is ours, bought fairly and squarely at a public auction and we intend to keep it."

His eyes became blank and his voice more menacing. "That would indeed be a dangerous course to follow, sir. I assure you those two people will stop at nothing to acquire the box. You are jeopardizing your very life and that of your wife."

"Then I assume it would be equally dangerous for you if you were to have it."

He smiled thinly. "But I am equipped to handle the others—you are not. You are only an ordinary citizen and not used to dealing with people such as those."

I held up a hand. "Please. You are speaking to a veteran of the United States Army who has survived two wars and several years of Army cooking. I'm afraid of nothing."

"You will regret this decision," he threatened.

I closed the door.

"You handled that very well," said Irene.

"I didn't handle anything. All I know is that if any of those crackpots show up here when I'm not around, don't hesitate to call the cops. There's something screwy about this whole thing. Whose estate did this box come from, anyway?"

She frowned. "A man named Knickerbocker or something like that." She shook her head. "It's slipped my mind."

"Well, maybe it will come back. We'd do well to try to find out

why the Doomsday Trio want it so much they're willing to threaten us to get it."

I sat at her desk and pulled the light close. The hasp of the box seemed ordinary enough, riveted in place, with a small keyhole. That small, it shouldn't be too hard to pick.

An hour later I gave up. If the lock was pickable it was beyond my capabilities. I sat there studying the box, turning it over in my hands, when the thought occurred that perhaps the hasp was a dummy and had nothing to do with opening the box at all.

I dug out a big reading glass Irene had picked up at one of her flea markets, thankful that at last I had found a use for something she had bought, and began examining the edges.

I was right. The lid wasn't really the lid. True, there was an indentation that would lead you to believe it was, but under the magnifying glass it was apparent that the leather had been pushed deep into a groove but was unbroken.

The problem then became, since it didn't open there where *did* it open? Even the magnifying glass provided no answer.

One thing I was sure of. If it could be opened at all, the answer was simple. Baffling as it was to people who didn't know the secret, the box opened easily and readily for the person who did.

Whatever it was, it needed nothing more than a touch—a slight pressure or a twist that would release an internal catch of some sort. I had seen something like it years ago. A friend had brought back an elaborately inlaid box of walnut and ivory from North Africa that was impossible to open unless you knew the secret of how to hold it and where to press with your thumbs. This had to work on the same principle. But how?

I examined all the surfaces carefully and found nothing, then began pushing and probing every square inch, paying careful attention to the gold stamping, thinking that perhaps the design had been put there deliberately to conceal the catch. I tried this and that without success for another half hour, but the entire time I sat there my mind was asking questions and finally the questions became more important than opening the box.

"Exactly where did you buy this thing?" I asked Irene.

"I told you. The Mount Olive Auction House."

"And you don't remember the name of the man who left the estate?"

"I'm sure it was Knickerbocker."

I headed for the phone.

"Dinner is ready," she said.

"It'll have to wait."

She rolled her eyes.

I found the number of the auction house in the directory and dialed, hoping I'd catch someone before it closed. I was lucky.

The voice was smooth and cultured. "It was not the estate of Mr. Knickerbocker, but of Mr. Liethgow Katzenbacher," it said.

"Whatever," I said. "Can you give me the name of the attorney who handled it?"

"That would be Mr. Dresheim. Is there some complaint? If so—"

"No complaint. Just curiosity."

I flipped the pages of the directory again and found Dresheim's number. At least I assumed it was Dresheim's number, because the first name was Hillingsworth and if that wasn't a lawyer's name it should have been.

It was.

I explained about the box.

"Are you dissatisfied with your wife's purchase?"

"Not at all, but I'd like to talk to you about it. When would be convenient?"

"I can't imagine what you wish to discuss."

"Nothing more than a little background. Three people have approached us aggressively to buy the box. I'd like to know why they consider it so valuable that they'd threaten us if they didn't get it."

"A thin man, an assertive woman, and an Indian gentleman?"

"The same. Who are they?"

"Mr. Katzenbacher's nephew, his secretary, and his business associate. All three are fools."

"I already know that—I'd like to know why they want the box."

"Very well. My evening is free. Why not make it about eight?"

We drove over in the soft summer darkness, the box on the seat between us. Dresheim lived off one of the main streets, the house at the end of a semicircular driveway tucked away behind a high stone wall.

He offered us a drink and seats on a sofa that seemed to have no bottom.

"You brought it, I see," he said. "I thought I'd never lay eyes on it again."

"Then you were familiar with it before settling the estate."

"Many people were. Mr. Katzenbacher kept it on the desk in his office. He told everyone it held the secret of his business success."

"Ah," I said. "Now I know why they want it. What did Katzenbacher do for a living?"

"Technically, he was an importer. He scoured the world markets for merchandise he believed would sell on the American market. That's how he acquired the box. He had it made by an artisan in the Mideast on one of his trips. But there was more to him than being an importer. He was an advertising and promotional genius with the ability to create a demand for the articles he imported, a true entrepreneur. His ideas were extremely creative, if hardly based on fact. They resulted in some astonishing sales figures."

"I know what you mean. I myself have almost yielded several times to the concept that life would no longer be worth living if I didn't immediately rush out and buy something I've seen advertised, until I realized I'd survived quite well to that point without it."

I turned to Irene. "Any questions?"

"Only one. If the box contains the secret of his business success, why didn't he will it to one of those three people?"

"Simple," said Dresheim. "He had no use for any of them. He considered his nephew a loser, couldn't stand Miss Fairchild, and suspected Hari Pakar of being a thief. If the box does indeed contain the formula for his success, they would be the last people he'd want to have it."

"These people have threatened us," I said. "Would you consider them dangerous?"

"Greedy people who believe a fortune is theirs if they would only reach out and take it are always dangerous."

As he let us out, a thought came.

"Tell me, did Katzenbacher at any time give you an indication as to how the box could be opened?"

He shook his head. "Sorry. Nothing. I can't help you there."

As Irene drove, I glanced at the box in my lap several times, intrigued by the thought that at last she had stumbled across something of value. Unfortunately, it was also of value to those three crackpots who just might do anything to get it.

At home I went over the box again in a futile attempt to find the way to open it before dropping it into a drawer of her desk.

"You're giving up?" she asked.

"A Mooncastle never gives up. If that box can tell me how to get rich I'll open it one way or another, but it occurs to me that with a

world of modern technology available, I'm wasting my time. Tomorrow I'll let my fingers walk through the Yellow Pages until I find someone willing to X-ray it for me. That should tell me two things—what's in it and how to open it "

"Do you think those people will come back?"

"They may harass us for a few days, hoping you'll sell the box," I conceded.

"I don't want their money," she said firmly. "And I really don't care if there's anything in the box at all. It's very pretty and I intend to keep it."

Such logic couldn't be disputed. "Let's go to bed," I said.

Sometime during the early morning hours she shook me awake. "I heard a strange noise."

"Then find out what it is."

"You're the veteran who's afraid of nothing."

I groaned and picked up the police nightstick she'd acquired several years ago with the argument she needed some measure of protection for her treasures. I never intended to use it. If someone was dumb enough to want the stuff I'd have helped carry it out.

I made my way downstairs, turning on lights as I went. She followed. I snapped on the light in the dining room and blinked in the glare for a moment before seeing Claiborne Beamer standing in the open patio doorway with a large revolver in his hand.

Irene gave a little shriek.

"I warned you," he said. "I intend to have that box."

"I never argue with a man with a gun," I said, indicating Irene's desk in the corner. "Help yourself. It's in the bottom drawer."

Eyes glowing, he half ran to the desk, whipped open the drawer, and clutched the box to his chest. "At last!" he said. "Rolls Royces and condominiums, yachts and private airplanes, here I come!"

"You're going nowhere," snapped a voice from the still-open doorway. Angora Fairchild stood holding a revolver that in her feminine hand seemed larger than his. "I'll take the box," she said. "Hand it over, you sleaze, or I'll blow your ears off."

She moved to one side of the dining-room table, one hand extended, fingers beckoning. Beamer put the box on the table and gave it a little push, sliding it halfway across but out of her reach.

Her finger pointed at me. "You. Forget your course in Basic Rudeness and slide it toward me slowly."

"Don't anyone move," whispered another soft voice.

Hari Pakar had taken her place in the patio doorway. His revolver seemed smaller but equally as deadly. "Since only I deserve the box, I will take it," he said.

The three of them formed a triangle, the box in the center. The guns in their hands wavered from side to side, because each had two targets. It was a classic standoff until one of them chose to break it.

Beamer did.

"It's mine!" he screamed and pulled the trigger.

I grabbed Irene and dove under the table, the guns roaring above us, glass shattering as the patio doors went, then the china closet.

I put my lips close to her ear. "The National Rifle Association is going to hear from me about this," I said grimly.

The fire fight ended in a furious clicking as hammers fell on spent shells.

I poked my head out from under the table.

The dining room was a shambles. The patio doors lay in shards on the floor along with fragments of our best china. Bullet-punctured pictures hung askew and the walls had so many black holes they appeared to be suffering from some strange disease.

All three of them were still standing, examining themselves for blood, amazement and relief written on their faces, their eyes unbelieving. But it isn't easy to hit someone with a handgun under ordinary circumstances unless you've had a great deal of practice—with one or two others firing at you at the same time it's almost impossible.

I crawled out and smashed the nightstick down on the table. "All right, that's it!" I shouted. "You've made a Mooncastle mad! If you're through fooling around, I'm going to settle this thing once and for all!"

I yanked open the sideboard, extracted a large carving knife, and brandished it above my head. All three shrank from me. I could understand why. If I had shot up a man's house and he waved a large carving knife at me I'd shrink too. But all I did was stand the box on end. "I'm going to open this thing right now."

"That isn't fair!" they chorused, but they crowded forward just the same, their eyes eager and glistening with greed.

I placed the knife precisely in the groove that indicated the fake lid and hit it sharply with the heel of my hand. The knife, which had handled many a tough turkey in its day, had no difficulty in slicing through the box, the two halves falling apart.

There was nothing inside.

Beamer made a little choking sound that was almost a sob.

Angora Fairchild gave a little moan.

Hari Pakar let his breath out in a long hiss.

I grinned. I had been beginning to suspect there was more to Liethgow Katzenbacher than met the eye. I raised the knife. "Now get out of here and never darken my door again."

Tears rolled down Angora Fairchild's cheeks.

"If the three of you had any sense," I added, "you'd combine your talents and experience and go into business for yourselves instead of looking for a magic formula. With a little luck and a lot of hard work you might be successful. That's the American way."

"And not a bad idea," said Beamer slowly. "I'll be president."

Angora Fairchild forgot her tears. "The hell you *will*," she countered. "I'll be president."

Pakar smiled his thin smile. "I do not care who is president as long as I am treasurer."

The three of them disappeared into the night.

Irene looked around the room. "I'm sure the police'll be here shortly. What will we tell them?"

"Just a little domestic squabble because I insisted on watching a John Wayne movie on the late late show. They'll be happy it's over."

Indignation grew as she surveyed the damage. "Really, we should have made them pay for this."

"They left us something far more valuable than money," I pointed out. "We now possess Katzenbacher's secret."

"Nonsense. The box was empty."

"Exactly, but that was just a little quirk in Mr. Katzenbacher's character. Instead of being written down, the secret was the box itself."

She placed a hand on my forehead. "The excitement was too much for you."

"I'll explain it to you. Katzenbacher knew that to be successful he had to create a demand for the items he imported. Unless people want something, it has little value. The box is a perfect example. Empty, with no way to open it, it is pretty but useless. But he gave it a value far beyond its intrinsic worth by telling everyone it contained a secret. The greater the promise of reward something gives, the higher the price. I don't care what it is—gold, diamonds, that junk you collect, even people, the price goes up in direct ratio to the demand. If people don't want something, you can't give it away. But

if they want something badly enough they'll pay to get it. Those three were willing to kill to get something they thought would make them rich. All Katzenbacher did was apply that principle—no great mystery to any advertising man—to the things he imported. He used the box to illustrate his point."

"You must be joking."

"Hardly. Take your glass butterfly with the broken wing. You bought it for fifty cents. How much do you think you can get for it?"

"Probably a dollar."

"But suppose I told you I suspect it is the last sample extant of the beautiful glass art produced in the Eighteenth Century by the Schemmerhorn Glass Works of Bavaria?"

"I've never heard of the Schemmerhorn Glass Works."

"Neither has anyone else. Does it matter?"

"I see," she said thoughtfully. "I suppose that to Mr. Katzenbacher my bust of the Indian with the chipped nose would be a rare execution by an unknown artist of Cochise, the Terror of the Plains."

"Wahoo," I said. "Now you've got it! Katzenbacher would be proud of you!"

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

CRIME OF PASSION

by DALE HOCHSTEIN

The jacket was ripped and thrown on the bed.
The insides were cut — here and there lay a shred.
The spine was broken and the rest is history—
I tore up the book 'cause it wasn't a mystery.

© 1982 by Dale Hochstein.

The boy was a surprise his middle-aged parents were still coping with. "The boy sees too many crime movies," his father explained in embarrassment when they were stopped by the metal detector leading to the departure gates at the airport. "He says he wants to be a gangster when he grows up . . ."

ROLE MODEL

BY AL NUSSBAUM

I noticed the boy at LAX, the Los Angeles International Airport, even before our plane took off. He was about twelve years old and five and a half feet tall and he was traveling with a gray-haired couple in their mid-fifties. From the look of things, they were his parents, and he had come along late in their lives, a surprise they were still coping with.

On the surface they didn't seem to be doing badly. The boy's jeans, sportshirt, and lightweight jacket were a bit worn, but clean and neat. The man's suit and the woman's dress were a bit less stylish and more worn, showing they placed the lad's needs ahead of their own. Except for the boy's head of wild-looking, mouse-brown hair, he might have blended with, and disappeared into, the crowd.

However, it wasn't just his hair that set him apart from the other passengers—it was his actions. He was the only one stopped by the metal detector at the mouth of the tunnel leading to the departure gates. And it wasn't the usual false alarm. The boy had a pistol tucked into the waistband at the small of his back.

It turned out to be one of the realistic toys they make today, but no one realized that immediately. There were about thirty seconds of frenzy, followed by fifteen minutes of "It's only a toy" and "How was I supposed to know? It looks real enough."

The parents were embarrassed and the guards apologetic, but the boy was defiant. "If that was a real gun, you wouldn't have taken it away from me so easily," he said. "Someday I'm coming back here with a *real* gun. Then I'll show you!"

"The boy watches too much television, sees too many crime

© 1982 by Al Nussbaum.

movies," the father explained to no one in particular with a shake of his head. "He says he wants to be a gangster when he grows up."

A couple of people smiled at that, but the smiles quickly slipped away with the realization that there was no humor in it.

The boy and his parents weren't the only passengers to catch my eye. There were two others who arrived after we were all seated on the plane. There was a short delay, then they came down the aisle, heading for the rear of the plane.

I don't think I've ever seen two more dissimilar men traveling together. One was a slim good-looking young man in his late twenties wearing a three-piece suit and carrying a black attaché case. The other was a stocky middle-aged man in a worn leather jacket carrying a scuffed and battered overnight bag that hung from his thick arm as though it was filled with bricks.

The first man had a light, athletic way of moving and an easy smile for the curious faces turned his way. The older man was grim-faced and plodding, as though he had to force himself to take each step. The best thing you could say about his looks is that he was ugly. Five-o'clock shadow covered his cheeks, his nose was crooked and flat, and half of one ear was gone. The missing part had been torn away, leaving a jagged, curved edge. It was a wound I thought could have been inflicted only by teeth.

I wondered what the connection between them could be. And then I saw it. The connection was perhaps the only one possible—a pair of handcuffs.

They took seats a couple of rows behind me, but I didn't turn to look. The boy, sitting with his parents a row ahead, did it for me. "Wow! Did you see him, Dad? That's the toughest guy I ever saw! Gangsters don't even look that tough in the movies!"

The FASTEN SEATBELTS sign went on, and the plane began to taxi for takeoff. The stewardess came down the aisle, checking our belts. When she reached the policeman and his prisoner behind me she said, "You'll have to remove the handcuffs, Officer. Federal regulations do not permit restraints while a plane is in flight."

There was the clink of metal to show he had complied.

I remember thinking at the time, What a stupid rule that is. We'd all feel safer if there were more restraints on that criminal, not less.

The boy sitting ahead of me wasn't the only one who seemed fascinated by the policeman and his prisoner. Once we were in the air, there was an almost constant stream of curious passengers past

my seat. Ostensibly heading for the restrooms in the rear, their steps slowed as they passed the policeman and his prisoner.

No one said anything to them except the boy. When it was his turn to make the trip to the rear, I felt compelled to turn around and look. He stopped and stared right at the prisoner. Then I heard him say, "You're the toughest-looking man I ever saw." There was awe in his voice.

The grim-faced man ignored him and kept his face buried in a magazine, but his companion laughed. "He's not so tough, kid. Imagine what the guy who flattened his nose or ate his ear must be like."

I had to smile at that, but the boy didn't. He had found a role model. It was going to take more than mere words to turn his head around. He stood there for a few additional moments before moving on.

The first sign of trouble came when we were fifteen minutes out of Chicago. The plane jumped and bucked as we ran into some clear-air turbulence. Then it rolled onto its back and fell two thousand feet before the pilot regained control. The FASTEN SEATBELTS sign came on—a bit late for the people who had been thrown into the aisle—and the terrible sound of tearing metal filled the cabin.

I turned to get the stewardess's reaction and was immediately sorry I did. Her smile disappeared for the first time in the flight. Color drained from her face and her eyes projected the panic of a trapped animal. She regained her composure quickly, but I knew the confidence she tried to show was an act. The sound of rending metal was repeated, then followed by a terrifying crash from the tail section. I felt my legs tremble as cold fear washed over me.

The pilot's voice, speaking in a calm, nearly bored tone, came from the loudspeakers. "This is your captain. We've lost an engine. Ordinarily we could continue the flight with as few as two engines, but this one tore loose from the wing and hit the vertical stabilizer. I no longer have full control. We can still go up or down, but I have no control over side-to-side motion."

He paused to give that time to sink in. "That means we will be unable to land at the airport in Chicago. We will have to make an emergency landing in Lake Michigan. Flight attendants, please instruct everyone in emergency procedures."

I had flown for years and heard the emergency instructions dozens of times. They were usually given at the start of each flight. This time, however, I really paid attention. I hung onto every word—as

I'm sure everyone did. We were told where the emergency exits were located, how to inflate the rubber life-vests, and what position to assume for the water landing. After that, pillows were distributed for us to hold in our laps and press our faces into. Then the floor of the plane tilted and we headed down.

The next few minutes seemed like hours to me. What was taking so long? I raised my head to look around and got a view of the lake through the window just before we hit. It was rough and choppy with a lot of angry white water—nothing like the smooth glasslike surface I'd been hoping for. I buried my face in the pillow and prayed.

The plane hit with enough force to loosen teeth. I was thrown forward and my safety-belt cut into my midsection, forcing all the air from my lungs. Then, instead of staying afloat as we were told it would do, the plane broke in half. The wings and forward section slipped beneath the surface while my ears were still ringing from the crash.

Most of the forward passengers had still been strapped to their seats when the water came between us. Fighting panic, I tugged at the release on my seatbelt and stood up. The floor sloped toward the ragged opening and rough water. Now what? The stewardess had gone down with the front of the plane. We had no one to guide us.

Then the young cop spoke up. "Get out of the plane! There's no telling how long it'll float! Get into the water and inflate your vests!"

I didn't wait to be told twice. I ran to the opening and threw myself into the water. The cop, the boy, and a couple of other passengers were right behind me. Then the wreck shifted abruptly and the opening in the fuselage sank under the water, effectively cutting off the escape route.

The inflated vests kept us upright with our heads out of the water. We bobbed about like giant corks and tried to stay together by linking arms. The tail section was still afloat but no one could tell for how long.

Suddenly the boy began to scream: "My mom and dad are still in there! How are they gonna get out?"

"And what about the others?" someone asked.

I turned my head toward the cop who was beside me. "What happened to your prisoner?" I asked.

He gave me a blank look for a moment. It was as though I was speaking a foreign language he didn't understand. I figured the events of the past few minutes had driven all thought of his prisoner from his mind. "He was knocked out in the crash. Now he's trapped

in the plane with the rest," he replied in a matter-of-fact tone. He showed no sign of the panic I was feeling.

The kid continued to cry about his trapped parents.

The cop couldn't take very much of that. He struggled out of his life jacket with an expression of resignation on his face.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"The people still on the plane will have to swim underwater to get out," he explained. "But they can't do it wearing inflated vests. And I can't swim down to tell them wearing mine." He handed the vest to me. "Hang onto this," he said and dove from sight.

A few minutes later he reappeared with the boy's mother. While she clung to the rest of us, coughing and gasping for air, he went back to the wreck. He returned with her husband, then treaded water for a few moments while he caught his breath. He was grinning broadly, enjoying his role as hero. The last thing he did before diving again was wave to us, the loose handcuff dangling from his wrist.

A few seconds later the tail section shuddered and slid from sight. Some air bubbles broke the surface, but no one else appeared. The cop must have reached the wreck just in time to be dragged down with it.

We were rescued within an hour and taken to a Chicago hospital, everyone suffering from shock and exposure placed at one end of a large ward. There, despite our many differences, we grew to be friends.

The bodies of all the other passengers and crew were recovered, including the cop and his prisoner. There had been no last-second miracle to save them.

The boy stopped saying he wanted to be a gangster. He had found a new role model. Now he wanted to be a policeman. As for me, I'll always remember the hero as I last saw him—with the handcuff dangling from his wrist. His *right* wrist. Would a policeman cuff a prisoner to his right wrist? Probably not, unless he was left-handed. Would he have the left cuff attached to himself? Again, probably not, but it was possible.

I figure there's a good chance the slim young man was the prisoner and the grim-faced older man was the policeman. I could find out for sure. All it would take is a phone call.

But I'll never make that phone call. I don't want to know.

a **NEW** short story by

MARY BRAUND

"She could immediately hear sounds. She listened hard, tuned inward upon the set. The voices were difficult to identify. There was scraping and banging, like furniture being moved. Then she heard something like footsteps—footsteps coming closer and closer until they almost seemed to be in the room with her . . ."

Marian felt alienated living in the farmhouse that had belonged to Eric's family, desperately looking for a connection. Some will argue that this is a story of the supernatural, others that it is entirely psychological. Either way, it should please all who love the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe and his successors . . .

THE CRYSTAL SET

by **MARY BRAUND**

The hawthorn hedges on either side of the narrow lane were thick and high, heavy with bee-laden honeysuckle, a warm-scented tunnel muffling the distant sound of a farm tractor. The lane was deep-rutted, flowers sprouting in the overgrown ditch, grass knee-high down the center strip. Few vehicles used the lane any more—it twisted up from the beach to the small grey farmhouse, almost a secret path to the cove which even in the summer was private and deserted.

Marian hurried along the lane looking for Jamie and Eric. She felt a small chill wind on her back and shivered. Behind her the black clouds were gathering on the hillside above the house, the stony crags already obscured by a damp mist. She began to run, feeling again the sense of dread that enveloped her whenever the sun left this place.

© 1982 by Mary Braund

Round a bend in the lane she saw them—Eric, her husband, and Jamie, her son—both of them idling, dawdling along, Eric with his slow heavy tread, Jamie swatting at the cow parsley in the hedge.

"Hurry!" she called, her hands round her mouth. "Lunch is ready and it's going to rain!"

They looked up and waved but didn't perceptibly quicken their pace. She watched them come slowly closer, her hands on her hips, and could not help smiling at them. They both loved it here so that she could not resent their palpable enjoyment both of the place and each other. She only wished she could share in the pleasure more, but she was a city girl, born and bred, and this whole venture filled her with uneasiness—the move down to Wales, the neglected farmhouse, no neighbors, no busy streets. Above all, she knew it was the insecurity of Eric's change of career. She had grown used to a regular income. If he would just get on and write, stop living off the advance for his second book and finish it. If only the house was in shape. Maybe then she would feel more secure, not fear the ominous quietness of the countryside.

Eric smiled at her as they reached where she stood waiting, his face relaxed, smooth. "Damn the rain," he said, looking up at the clouds. "Jamie and I were going to look for gulls' eggs on the cliffs this afternoon."

"Oh, Eric, isn't that dangerous? Climbing the cliffs?" And then the rain started, heavy drops spattering in the dust of the lane, and they all turned and ran back to the house. The big iron latch on the back door was stiff as they pushed it open, the hinges creaking. I must oil them, Marian thought, and forgot about the cliff-climbing.

As they sat eating lunch in the stone-flagged kitchen, the rain fell faster and faster, a wind coming up from the northeast driving the rain against the windows, darkening the house as the clouds swept down from the hillside. Jamie wrinkled his nose, the freckles dark against the golden brown of his face.

"It would have been fun to find gulls' nests," he said.

"We'll go another day," his father assured him.

Marian groaned, "Oh, please—" and they both grinned at her.

"It's all right, Mum," Jamie said. "We'll be very careful, won't we, Dad?"

She was afraid to protest too much. As long as it rained, they couldn't go. She would argue about it later, to Eric.

As she got up to clear the dishes she became aware of another

sound, a distinct dripping noise from above her head. "Listen," she said and the three of them gazed at the ceiling.

"Damn." Eric pushed back his chair. He raised a palm to her. "Don't tell me, I know. I should have done something about the roof before this."

He disappeared upstairs with a bucket. "It's the loft for you and me," he said to Jamie as he returned. "A few running repairs."

Marian held the ladder for them as they clambered through the narrow trap door, passing up a varied assortment of buckets and pans, tools, and pieces of wood to them. She wasn't too confident of Eric's abilities as a handyman. "We'll get someone to come and do the roof properly, won't we?" she asked the back of his heels.

"Tomorrow," his voice came back faintly at her.

"Tomorrow," she echoed. Always tomorrow.

She left them to it and lit the fire in the sitting room, kneeling in front of the old-fashioned grate, watching the sticks catching, the tongues of flame licking at the coals. The rain was streaming down the windowpanes and the small room would have been gloomy without the flaring kindling. She sat back on her heels, gazed into the fire, then stared around at the flower-patterned wallpaper, wrong for the size of the room, the old mahogany bureau still filled with family papers, the family Bible on its tall wooden stand, the family photos still hanging where they'd been when she and Eric came to the house. All Eric's family. Not hers. Nothing to do with her, all of them dead and gone before she had known Eric except for his uncle and aunt who were too old and feeble to come to the wedding in London.

If she could only be without the constant reminders of his family. There on the wall his Uncle Matthew and Aunt Maud. There his cousin David who would have inherited the farm if he had not been killed in the war. There the grandfather who had lived until he was over ninety. There Eric's mother. There his grandmother in whale-boned collar. All of them dead and Eric the inheritor of the farm. He had had to sell off the land to pay the death duties, but the house was still here and so were she and Eric and Jamie—and so were all these things that weren't hers.

In a sudden burst of resentment against this family she had never known, against this house she didn't want, Marian leaped to her feet and began hauling the photos off the wall. She struggled with the heavy bureau but could only move it a few inches away from the wall, and even as she panted with effort, feeling the tears of

frustration stinging her eyes, she saw the faded patches left where the bureau and the framed photos had been on the flowered wallpaper.

The paper, if she could just get rid of the paper!

She dug a fingernail experimentally under a loose edge, feeling a surge of satisfaction as a huge piece of the friable old paper tore away in her hands. Another loose edge and then another. She ripped and pulled, round the corner, tearing and dragging, layers and layers of ancient paper coming into view. Layers and layers of Eric's family. The paper fell in heaps at her feet—climbing roses, Regency stripes, twining ivy.

"What on earth are you doing?"

Marian jumped at the sound of Eric's voice behind her. She looked from his dismayed face to the peeling walls. "Suddenly—" she stammered—"suddenly I couldn't stand that paper any more."

"I liked it the way it was," Eric protested, picking up a discarded segment and turning it over between his fingers. "Don't you think you might have asked me first?"

Now she felt guilty. "Yes, yes, I should have done—it was an impulse! But, oh, Eric, won't it be better with nice plain walls? We can put all those old photos away, move the bureau—" She stopped, recognizing the disapproval in his eyes.

"That bureau has been there ever since I can remember, Marian. I really would like it to stay there."

She shrugged her shoulders. She could put off arguing about that till later, too. "How's the work in the loft coming on?"

Eric's brown eyes changed to gleaming enthusiasm. "That's what I came down to tell you. There's a veritable treasure trove up there. Come and look."

"Perhaps I should finish in here first." She looked around and the devastated room stared back accusingly. She felt suddenly tired, drained of energy. "No, I'll come with you."

The loft was dusty and draped with cobwebs. Marian could almost hear the rustle of spiders' feet as she pulled herself gingerly through the trap door. The high skylight was grimy with untold years of dirt and the sound of the rain very loud on the slates, dripping into the buckets. Eric and Jamie had rigged up a couple of lamps but the light from the bare bulbs didn't reach the dim, distant corners under the eaves.

She shivered. "It's spooky up here."

"Spooky, maybe. Interesting, certainly. Isn't that right, Jamie?"

Marian couldn't even see Jamie. His voice came from a dark corner. "Gosh, yes, Mum. You should see what we've found." He waved a flashlight in her direction. "Old picture albums and trunks full of the weirdest old clothes and papers and letters. It's marvelous, isn't it, Dad?"

"Marvelous," Eric echoed. "Look at this, Marian." He hauled a large leather-bound album from the top of a teacheast into the light.

He turned the thick yellowing pages, crammed with spotted fading photographs. "See, here's Grandfather on his horse—he used to hunt in those days. And there's my mother when she was a child. And here's the family—looks like a picnic down at the cove."

The pages turned and crackled in Marian's ears as she watched Eric's jabbing finger.

"There's David when he was about the same age as Jamie. Jamie looks like him a bit, don't you think? Funny how the family resemblances get carried on. Here's Davy with his prize Shorthorn heifer at the County Show. Isn't she beautiful?"

Marian laughed. "Beautiful? Beautiful! You can't call a cow beautiful."

"Oh, but they are, Marian. You just don't know them, wonderful warm stubborn creatures. I loved coming here for the holidays, dreamed one day I'd be a farmer like Granddad. Maybe I still can be. If I make some money out of this writing lark maybe I'll try buying back the land. There could be a farm here again."

She dared not raise her head from the album to look at him. "You must be joking."

"No, I'm serious. How's that for an idea, Jamie?"

"Great, Dad, wonderful." The glee in his voice came bubbling out of the shadows. "Could I have a horse and a cow of my own?"

"But of course. All farmers' sons have a horse and a cow of their own."

Marian fumbled at the pages of the book. "I could never be a farmer's wife."

"You could learn." His voice was light but she could detect one of Eric's ideas taking root, and her heart gave a lurch of panic. He had promised that this would just be a temporary move, that they would go back to London when he had made some real money. He had promised.

"Hey, here's something else." Jamie came scrambling over the trunks to the light, an ornate wooden box clutched in his hand.

"Whatever is this, Dad?" He and Eric bent their heads to investigate, Marian distracted in the background.

Eric lifted the hinged lid of the box and peered inside.

"Good heavens! You know what this is? It's a crystal set! Marian, look. It's an old crystal set and I do believe it might be the one Granddad and I built one year when I was down for the holidays. Yes—here's a diagram my grandfather drew. He loved tinkering with this sort of thing."

"What's a crystal set, Dad?"

"Ah, shades of my youth." Eric picked the pieces out of the box one by one. "See, this is the crystal and this is the coil and this delicate bit is what's called a whisker. We put them all together and we could tune into a broadcast through these headphones. Very exciting in the days before television."

"You mean it's a radio?" Jamie fingered the dusty components with renewed interest. "Would it still work, do you think?"

"We could give it a try, we could certainly give it a try. Come on, let's take it downstairs and work on it." Eric scooped the pieces together carefully and made for the ladder, followed by Jamie.

"The roof," Marian reminded him. "What about the roof?"

Eric paused with his head just showing through the trap.

"Oh, Lord, the roof. Just move a bucket around, will you, Marian? The rain seems to be easing. I'll see to it tomorrow."

Exasperated, she scrambled after them, anxious not to be left in the loft by herself.

She followed them into the blighted sitting room. "What's been going on here?" Jamie asked, looking at the shredded walls.

"Oh, that!" Eric had recovered his humor about it. "I think your mother is trying to eradicate the past."

All during the wet afternoon Jamie and Eric worked on the crystal set while Marian continued prying paper off the walls until they were bare to their plaster. They had tea by the fire and she felt almost part of a threesome again, like the old days, then they watched television. Reception was very bad because of the hills. And then it was time for Jamie to go to bed. He went reluctantly, dragging his feet up the stairs, loath to leave his new toy.

"We nearly had it working, Mum," he protested. "Promise you won't listen in without me?"

"We promise," Eric reassured him, giving him a good-natured shove up the stairs. He came back into the room smiling, clenching

his unlit pipe between his teeth, moving the pieces of the crystal set around absently. Marian sat watching him, a bundle of mending in her lap, hearing the slow process of Jamie preparing for bed above her head.

"You ought to do some writing," she said.

Eric looked at the clock above the mantelpiece. "I ought to. But it's too late to start now."

"You used to write at this time of night when we were in London."

Eric pressed the tobacco down into the bowl of his pipe, beginning the long-drawn-out process of lighting it which Marian knew was an evasion tactic.

"I wrote at this time of night," he said, holding a flaming match in front of his eyes, "because I had to work during the day." He sucked vigorously for a moment, wisps of smoke shifting in the air between them.

"You seemed to have more incentive when you were tied to a job."

"Only so that I could get out of that job. Is that what you would really prefer, Marian? My going off to the office every day and writing into the small hours every night? Would you really prefer to live in the suburbs of London than down here?"

She should say yes, yes, yes, she would prefer those suburbs in London to all the fields and cliffs and paths in Wales, and yes, she would prefer any semi-detached and people to a lonely farmhouse, however old and redolent with family history. She wasn't Welsh, she didn't belong, she would *never* belong here! She opened her mouth to tell him, but he looked so content. In time she would be able to persuade him this was the wrong sort of life for them. She took a deep breath.

"I said I would give it a try and I will. But you must do your part as well, Eric. You must make a success of it."

Now the pipe was burning, the bowl filled with a bright glow, reflecting in his face. He leaned back in his chair, smiling.

"But it is a success. Jamie and I are having a marvelous time."

He bent over the crystal set again, studying the diagram. "You know, I'm sure this is all together. I wonder why we can't get any sound out of it?" He picked up the spindly earphones, then laid them down. "I promised Jamie I'd wait for him. Tell you what, just to keep you happy I will try to do some writing."

He pulled his long body out of the chair and gathered up his typewriter from the table by the window. "I'll take it into the other room. These walls are not conducive to creativity."

Marian sat and looked at her mending for a long time, listening to the fitful, irregular tapping of the typewriter.

"Want a drink?" Eric called from the next room.

"No. No, thanks. Don't stop."

She heard the rattle of glasses and bottle and the typewriter fell silent. She sighed deeply. Her gaze rested incuriously on the crystal set spread out on the table, the earphones lying where Eric had dropped them. With a sudden desire to cover her ears so that she couldn't hear Eric not working, she picked them up. Odd, old-fashioned, still dusty instruments. The smooth curved metal fitted neatly around her head. The earpieces clamped over her ears, obliterating sound. They held her head as though in a vise.

She could immediately hear sounds. She listened hard, tuned inward upon the set. The noises were difficult to identify. There was scraping and banging, like furniture being moved. Then she heard something like footsteps—footsteps coming closer and closer until they almost seemed to be in the room with her. For a moment she tried to convince herself it was something else she was hearing, then she heard voices. Inaudible voices, distant at first, then nearer, coming closer like the footsteps, and as the words became clearer she realized they were Welsh. She didn't understand Welsh. If it was a play, it was a curious kind of play. The voices came and went and there were long gaps in the conversations.

There was something strangely compelling about the performance, incomprehensible though it was to her, and she sat in the fading light from the fire, listening, waiting for some word that would make sense to her. She sat so long and still that she finally nodded off to sleep.

She awoke suddenly as Eric shook her shoulder and she pulled off the earphones, feeling a little silly.

Eric smelled heavily of whiskey. "Been playing with our toy, eh?" He grinned at her. "We promised we'd wait for Jamie."

"You promised, not me." She yawned. "How's the writing going?"

"So-so. Could you hear anything?"

"Well, I could, but it was nothing that made any sense. A funny kind of play in Welsh."

Eric fingered the earphones, obviously tempted to put them on. "No, I'll wait for Jamie. And don't you tell him you've been listening in—it'll spoil his fun." He pulled at her arm. "Come on, let's go to bed. The writing didn't go so well but I feel creative in other ways."

In the high wooden bed, Marian felt detached from Eric's alcoholic lovemaking, her inner ear tuned to the crystal set.

The next morning, the rain still falling, Eric and Jamie returned to the crystal set. The sitting room looked more desolate than ever in the cold light of day and Marian regarded the bare walls with distaste. She wished now she had never started tearing the place apart.

"We ought to go into Creddech and get some wallpaper," she said. "Could we drive in this afternoon?"

Creddech was the nearest town of any size, ten miles away.

"Yes, all right," Eric replied absently. "You know, we can't get a thing out of this set. I wonder what you tuned into last night?"

"Did you hear something last night, Mum?" Jamie had one earpiece held against his head, his hand moving the whisker delicately first in one direction, then another, a line of concentration etched between his eyes. "You were supposed to wait for me."

"I know, I'm sorry. It was nothing very interesting. Here, let me have a listen." She held out her hand for the headpiece.

"It's no good." Jamie handed them over. "Nothing's coming through."

As Marian pulled on the earphones, even with Eric and Jamie in the room, she had the same sensation of shutting out the world. She could immediately hear the voices again, but now they were speaking in English and she closed her eyes the better to hear. A deep rolling masculine voice, thick with the Welsh accent. "Alice," it said. "Where are Matthew and Jane? I want to take them into Creddech with me."

Creddech! Marian blinked and opened her eyes very wide. Jamie was tugging at her arm, speaking to her—she could see his mouth moving but could hear nothing but the voices from the crystal set. She dragged the earphones roughly from her head.

"I can hear something. It's strange." Her voice faltered. "Listen. Listen and tell me what you can hear."

Jamie took the earphones and pressed them to his head. He screwed up his eyes and his mouth and listened, then shook his head. "I can't hear anything."

"But you must be able to. Eric, *you* try."

Eric tried. He sat for a long minute with the earphones but then he too shook his head. "Nothing."

Marian snatched the set back. Snippets of conversation. Children's voices, laughter, pots and pans rattling in the background—then

that resonant Welsh voice again. "Alice," it said, "where the devil are my boots?"

"I don't understand," she said. "I can hear quite plainly." She stared from one to the other. "I don't understand why you can't hear them."

"Them?" asked Eric, half laughing at her. "Who is them?"

Marian looked back at him steadily. "People. Just people talking." It was too absurd, what she was imagining. "Look, why don't you go into Creddech and bring back some of those wallpaper books. I'll finish my chores and have lunch ready for you when you get back. Maybe the weather will clear up this afternoon."

"Yes, and maybe we can go and look for gulls' eggs." Jamie leapt from the floor, all interest lost in the crystal set.

"No gulls' eggs," Marian repeated automatically.

"Eric," she said as he was getting into the car, "what was your grandmother's name?"

He looked up in surprise from the driver's seat. "My grandmother's name? That's a strange question. Walters, of course, same as my grandfather's." He slammed the door shut and rolled down the window. "Her first name, if that's what you mean, was Alice."

Alice. Marian watched the car disappear along the narrow lane. Alice. She stepped thoughtfully across the thick green lawn. Alice.

She had suspected it that moment in the sitting room. For some reason, she, Marian, had somehow tuned into the past on that dusty crystal set that had lain so long in the attic. It wasn't possible, and yet—had it been lying there absorbing the sounds of the years? No, it wasn't possible. But there was no doubt she could hear *something*.

She was drawn back to the house, to the crystal set. All right, it *wasn't* possible. But why was it that she, the stranger, the outsider of the family, could hear those voices when neither Eric nor Jamie could hear them? There must be an explanation.

Now the crystal set was a compulsion. She knelt beside the low table and fitted the earphones over her ears once more. Now that she knew what she was listening to she could sort out the sounds and the names. Matthew. That was Eric's uncle. Jane, that was his mother. She heard their voices as children.

There seemed no consequence in the events she could overhear—they seemed random, as though there were gaps of years in the conversations. Now here were Jane and Matthew as adults, suddenly, and new names were introduced into the family. Jane talking of the man

who was to become Eric's father. Matthew spoke of Maud who was to be his wife and who would farm here.

The rain lifted at last and the sun came out fitfully from behind the scudding clouds, but she could not break away from the crystal set. For the first time she heard Eric's name. A gentle female voice said, "It will be nice to have Eric here next week, won't it, Davy?" and the sound of a small boy's laughter.

Eric's family life was passing fast. Now here were tears. A woman weeping and the man who was Matthew tried to comfort her. Then another gap and Matthew was saying, "We'll leave the farm to Eric. He's a good boy—he'll come down here and look after it. He'll love it and care for it as Davy would have." And the woman sighing, "As long as he has a woman who'll love it, too. That's important, Matthew."

Marian removed the earphones. Was this eavesdropping? They say that eavesdroppers never hear good of themselves. What were those voices trying to tell her? That she didn't love the family home? But she knew that already. Could she change? Should she try?

She looked around the room, at the peeled walls, the stack of old photos discarded in a corner, the bureau pushed to one side, the small window deep-set in the thick stone walls. She felt chilled and fearful. She wandered from room to room, tracing a finger here along the furniture, scuffling a foot there in the worn carpet, looking for the spider webs gathering in the high corners, on the bacon-hooks deep in the ceiling of the kitchen.

In the bedrooms, damp patches showed dark on the plaster. There was a dank musty smell of old age and neglect. She rested her head against a window and looked out across the fields, up toward the crags of the hills, down toward the cliffs at the edge of the land. The clouds were high, racing out to sea, driven behind a wind that bent trees. She felt cold, desolate.

Suddenly she heard the drum of a car engine and, bending her head closer to the window, she was just in time to catch a glimpse of their small blue car roaring down the lane, past the house without stopping, on its way to the sea. Eric and Jamie, back from Creddech. They hadn't even stopped at the house for her.

Now she couldn't prevent the tears. She sat on the wide sill and wept tears of rage and self-pity. She wept because of the gulf she felt between herself and her husband and son, she wept at the thought of the years she might have to spend in this house—lonely,

unloving years. She wept because of the voices haunting her on the crystal set.

In the midst of her weeping, she went back to the set. Perhaps it had a message that could help her. There had to be a reason for it speaking to her.

For a long while she could hear nothing but the sound of her own sobs, then she stopped crying abruptly as she recognized the conversation.

"Maybe I'll try buying back the land. There could be a farm here again."

"You must be joking."

"No, I'm serious. How's that for an idea, Jamie?"

Eric's voice. Jamie's. Her own. The past had caught up, the crystal set was recording the present.

She listened, stunned, heard her own voice saying flatly, "I could never be a farmer's wife."

There was nothing more for the crystal set to tell her. It had caught up. She had learned nothing she didn't know already. There was silence from the crystal set. That was it, it had finished. But as she started to pull the headset off it crackled into life again.

A strange voice now, one she didn't recognize.

"I'm so sorry, so very sorry. I wish there was something I could say that would help."

Then Eric's voice, but different, broken, stricken. "If only Jamie and I hadn't thought of climbing the cliffs."

Marian gasped. Now the crystal set was in the future. She knew that. The cliffs! Eric and Jamie climbing the cliffs for gulls' eggs! She had begged them!

It was dangerous, terribly dangerous! She tore the headphones from her ears. Eric and Jamie driving past in the car, down to the sea. Jamie! Jamie!

She ran from the house, along the lane, down toward the cove, running because her son's life depended on it, the wind behind her, thrusting her on. She hardly felt the pain in her side, couldn't hear the thundering of her heart, the great dragging of her breath.

There was the car parked at the edge of the sand, but her frantic eyes couldn't see Jamie or Eric. She raced on to the sand, scouring the cliff face.

Then she saw them, thank God, high on the cliff path, walking away from her. She was not too late.

She screamed at them, but her thin voice was whipped away by the wind. She started up the path, exhausted now, the steep incline too much for her weakening legs. She called again and again but they did not hear. She must catch them, she must! She tried to run, slipping and stumbling. The sea-swept turf was slippery from the rain, and there, where the path curled close to the cliff edge, she fell.

She grasped hopelessly at the stunted bushes, the protruding rocks, and as her body gathered momentum, sliding and slithering over the cliff, her one last thought was that this was the message the crystal set had been giving her—the intruder, the interloper in the family, the eavesdropper.



DETECTIVERSE

SAFE MONEY

by M. E. MULLEN

Jesse James, that man of crime,
Lived and died before our time.
Were he here today, with his talents rare,
He'd no doubt do TV repair.

© 1982 by M. E. Mullen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME BEAT

by **R. E. PORTER**

25TH ANNIVERSARY: It was just twenty-five years ago that the late B. G. Davis left Ziff-Davis Publishing to start a new firm, Davis Publications, Inc. Its first publication was *EQMM*, purchased in August 1957 from Mercury Press. Davis went on to publish such magazines as *Science & Mechanics* and *Income Opportunities*, and in recent years expanded its fiction publications to include *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact*, *Crime Digest*, and *Science Fiction Digest*. More expansion plans are in the works, under the direction of publisher Joel Davis, son of the company's founder.

CLASSIC ANTHOLOGIES: Two fine anthologies rely heavily upon classic mysteries of the Golden Age and earlier. *Great Short Tales of Mystery and Terror* (Reader's Digest Association, Pleasantville, NY 10570, \$14.98 plus shipping) contains 45 detective, mystery, and fantasy stories by top names in the field. About half the stories are slightly condensed, so it's not for

those who'd be horrified at the idea of anyone tampering with "The Red-Headed League" or "The Cask of Amontillado." (I'm a bit horrified myself.)

The Great British Detective, edited by Ron Goulart (Mentor Books, \$3.95), contains 15 stories about famous British sleuths, including two (Loveday Brooke and Sexton Blake) rarely found in American anthologies. Most stories are from the Golden Age, with Ruth Rendell the only living author represented. Doyle, Chesterton, Christie, and Carr are present in both these anthologies—Carr with the same story, "The Incautious Burglar," which seems to be a favorite of anthologists these days.

HISTORICAL DETECTION: A recent book by James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (Knopf, \$19.50), focuses anew on an area first explored by Robin W. Winks in *The Historian As Detective* (1969). This latest volume deals mainly with events of American history, up to and including Watergate, and several

chapters hold special appeal to mystery fans, including investigations of the possible murder of Silas Deane in 1789 and the Sacco and Vanzetti case in 1929. Some prominent mystery writers have tried their hand at historical detection over the years, notably John Dickson Carr with *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey* (1936) and Josephine Tey with *The Daughter of Time* (1951).

LEARNING TO WRITE MYSTERIES: A perfect book for gifted youngsters interested in mystery writing is Sheila Whalen's *How-To Who Done It* (Resources For The Gifted, Inc., 3421 North 44th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85018). The book includes some traditional mystery plots with blanks in the stories to be filled in by the children who learn the techniques of clues, alibis, and detection, then go on to write their own stories, using casts of characters that are provided. Adults with the same interest should turn to Harvey and Audrey Bilker's new book, *Writing Mysteries That Sell* (Contemporary Books, \$7.95).

STUDYING SUSPENSE FILMS: An unusual course being offered this term at Elmira College is *The Suspense Film*, taught by Professor Amnon Kabatchnik. Each of its thirteen sessions deals with a different sub-genre and shows a film representative of the type. The series detective is represented by *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the private eye by *The Maltese Falcon*, the whodunit by *And Then There Were None*, and the psychological

thriller by *Diabolique*, and so on.

A LOST MYSTERY?: Reader Angelo Panagos writes to wonder whatever happened to *The Episode of the Demoiselle D'Ys*. It was to have been the first Trevis Tarrant novel by C. Daly King, and Ellery Queen reported completion of the manuscript in his introduction to a King short story in *EQMM*, December 1946. The book was never published.

Is there any chance it might be found among King's papers, as was a short story *EQMM* published in 1979?

FOR PRIVATE-EYE FANS: *The Not So Private Eye*, a fan magazine which published ten issues at irregular intervals over the past few years, has now resumed regular publication. Price of a sample issue is \$2.00 and a year's subscription is \$8.00, from editor Andy Jaysnovitch, 6 Dana Estates Drive, Parlin, NJ 08859.

MYSTERY BOOKSHOP: Toronto has a new mystery bookshop: Sleuth of Baker Street, 1543 Bayview Avenue.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: British TV viewers are enjoying *The Agatha Christie Hour* this fall. It's a weekly series of ten mysteries based upon Christie short stories, and American viewers should be seeing it soon.

Alison Morley Wilson is completing an annotated bibliography of August Derleth, to be published soon by Scarecrow Press.

Ray Bradbury is completing a suspense novel which Knopf plans to publish next year.

© 1982 by R. E. Porter.

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

Some of the great Hollywood studios during the Golden Age of film specialized in certain areas of moviemaking they cornered as their very own: for Universal it was the horror film, for M-G-M the musical.

The RKO Radio Pictures studio, which during the Thirties had brought us King Kong and Fred Astaire, during the war and post-war period helped to evolve the American *film noir* genre. It was not theirs exclusively—Fox, for instance, produced a superb series of naturalistic big-city crime films—but RKO released a series of dark dramas that set trends and accurately caught moods of uncertainty and despair. *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), with Dick Powell as the Chandleresque hero portrayed to grim perfection, was discussed in the last issue of *EQMM*. The other examples are many.

As early as 1940, RKO's B-unit invested shadowy, bleak atmosphere to films like *Stranger on the Third Floor*, a moody, introspective drama of a fledgling reporter, bewildered by a faceless, impersonal city, who is arrested for the murder of a rooming-house neighbor on mere circumstantial evidence. The real killer is Peter Lorre, a street lunatic, but he is seen only fleetingly and has virtually no dialogue—the entire focus is on the hapless hero buffeted by fate and

condemned to die by a jury of his peers. The dim streets and squalid buildings of this city of strangers—the hero's bleak surroundings—set the stage for the RKO crime films to come.

Dick Powell enlarged his success as Philip Marlowe by playing a succession of *film noir* heroes. In RKO's *Cornered* (1945), his mission is more personal and desperate—searching out his wife's murderers in the postwar back streets of Marseilles and Rio. Less international in its melodrama, closer to the everyday traumas of the merciless metropolis, was RKO's *Deadline at Dawn* (1946), based on a William Irish novel, in which a bewildered sailor (Bill Williams) searches a hot New York night—aided by a dancehall girl (Susan Hayward) and a taxi-driver (Paul Lukas)—for clues to clear him of the murder of a girl, a murder of which he is not at all sure he is innocent. *The Setup* relentlessly closes in on doomed boxer, Robert Ryan, pressured by gangsters to throw a fight.

Two seldom revived RKO *noir* films are outstanding. In *Out of the Past*, Robert Mitchum is an ex-convict private eye trying in vain to outdistance the woman who years before entrapped him in a gangland double-cross. Even though he has buried himself in the country, both the woman and the gang lord

surface again "out of the past." In *They Live by Night* (1948), we follow the rural flight of two young lovers, Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell, fugitives forced by fate into a life of crime and a tragic finale.

Even in its last decade, the studio's noir dramas were fresh and inventive. *Sudden Fear* (1952) presented Joan Crawford with one of her best roles: turning the tables on a husband she discovers is planning to kill her. *While the City Sleeps* (1956) weaves many destinies together as a disturbed youngster seeks out random mur-

der victims. Fritz Lang directed and Dana Andrews starred.

But among the most memorable of RKO's crime output was *The Narrow Margin* (1952), impressive because it gave maximum impact on a shoestring budget. Riding a transcontinental train, a police detective must escort a gangster's tough widow to trial in Los Angeles. It is an explosive journey with many twists. Like the best of film noir, its walls are shadowy and claustrophobic, yet one more tribute to a studio—alas, no longer in production—which knew how to turn out a thriller well.

© 1982 by Chris Steinbrunner.

INTERVIEW: JAMES POWELL (1)

This is the first part of an interview that will be concluded in the next issue.

EQMN: You were born in Toronto. Were you raised there?

POWELL: My family lived in enough corners of Toronto for me to go to six grade schools. They moved a great deal. But in every case until the last I was successful in finding them again.—For the most part we lived in the downtown section, which boasted many fine old Victorian houses humbled into rooming houses—gas stoves in the paneled halls and stained glass on the dark landings. Today I think much of that area is fashionable restored townhouses. Cabbage Hill. I don't recall anyone who lived there ever calling it that.

EQMN: The name Powell makes you Irish, right?

POWELL: Powell is a Welsh name. The wise English, using Celt against Celt, sent mine to keep the Irish down under Elizabeth or Cromwell. Then in the 1790s another James Powell, commissioned ensign in a regiment of foot, left Manor Hamilton, County Leitrim, for the wars. Somewhere between 1810 and 1815 he served with the Quebec City garrison. Later the regiment was settled near Perth, Ontario, to be available if the Americans should stray over the border again. And hence from all of that to all of this.

EQMN: You studied and taught in France for three years.

POWELL: I studied for a year at

the Sorbonne. At least I was in Paris and sometimes made an appearance at the University. My courses were directed to studies in comparative literature, of which nothing ever came. I spent a year in Marseilles as an English-language assistant in a high school and then another year at a normal school in Valence. I admire the French, their pride, culture, and cast of mind, though my appreciation did not come quickly.

EQMN: Did you start to write while you were there?

POWELL: I had been writing long before I went to France. Like many of my contemporaries growing up in Canada during the late Forties and early Fifties, I was influenced by the CBC radio dramas, particularly the famous "Stage" series. My writing began with radio plays in high school years. None of this ever heard the light of day. And rightfully so.

EQMN: Can you track your interest in the mystery?

POWELL: While I was in France I heard that some casino cities employed special police of a public-relations sort to follow heavy losers about to make sure they didn't commit suicide in town. That set me wondering how so depressing a job would affect the policeman. The result was "The Friends of Hector Jouvet." I submitted the story to seventeen magazines. The seventeenth was *EQMM*. That's when I realized I was writing mystery stories.

EQMN: That first story (*EQMM*, April 1966) was set in San Sebastiano. What are some other quaint

customs of that small country besides intervention by the police in potential suicides?

POWELL: Good Prince Adalbert's Day is a city-wide treasure hunt where the inhabitants of the insane asylum search for prizes, including the presidency of the thirteen-man municipal council. Since the president only votes in the case of a tie, six sane council members will have already voted the way the president votes. During the St. Sebastian's Day parade, the Filles du Sud, descendants of Confederate families who migrated there after the Civil War, pass through the crowd with long arrows on which the spectators impale bank notes. These arrows are later inserted in the papier-mâché statue of the saint in the Place d'Iota. The proceeds go to the Marbeuf Museum, which displays only paintings of food. The ceremonies surrounding the coronation of the prince are quite colorful and unusual but too lengthy to go into here.

EQMN: Through the Ambrose Ganelons, four generations of detectives with the same names whose activities span 125 years, our readers have come to know San Sebastiano very well. In *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* you are quoted as saying, "Having fashioned a history for San Sebastiano worthy of any country in Europe, laid down its ample boulevards, set its buildings in place, and originated its many quaint customs I find myself replying sharply to those who suggest it is only Monaco under another name.

In fact the truth is quite the other way around." Do you often find life imitating your art?

POWELL: Not as much as I would like. Life is incorrigible. It won't learn by sermon or example. If I'd written my life instead of living it, I'd have done a much better job—editing out most of the desk time and interior monologue and replacing it with a good heaping measure of swashbuckle. Life has botched the hero, a basically sympathetic figure. I see him slim-hipped and craggy, with a cool eye to match his warm heart, and a long temper. Every three chapters or so, the future of humanity or western civilization would depend upon his tiptop physical condition, keen mind, and indomitable pluck. The life pales beside the book. Personally, I'm looking forward to the movie.

EQMN: You've been called the S. J. Perelman of the mystery story. He once said that New York City is a great place to live if you like a shiv up your back. You once lived in Manhattan—how do you feel about the place?

POWELL: Even after Paris I

can't think of a more exciting and invigorating place to be than Manhattan when I first moved there in 1958. I shared a fifth-floor walkup in the last old brownstone on Eighty-eighth Street between Fifth and Madison, down the street from the Guggenheim. When the landlord managed finally to throw everyone out so he could put up a marble facade, a doorman, and an awning and get out from under rent control, I moved to West Fifty-sixth Street. There I spent most of my time standing on the street corners hoping people would ask me how to get to Carnegie Hall so I could urge them to practice. No one ever asked.

But to answer your question, I like Manhattan. Mr. Perelman spent more time there than I did and probably saw it as his own child, one that had turned into a spoiled and shivish thing. My stays were shorter visits by an indulgent uncle who doesn't have to live with the brat. I was finally pulled to earth by love in a small Pennsylvania town. I think an old chicken farmer like Mr. Perelman would have appreciated that.

THE JURY BOX

by **JON L. BREEN**

This time around, an exceptionally strong crop of reprints pull rank on the new books.

Dorothy Salisbury Davis's *A Gentle Murderer* (Avon, \$2.50) is

rightly considered a modern classic of suspense fiction. The 1951 novel offers a fine portrait of the dark side of Manhattan, inverted detection along parallel lines by a po-

liceman and a priest, excellent style and characterization, and a social consciousness all the more refreshing for its current unfashionableness. The new Introduction Davis wrote for the 1980 Gregg Press edition has been included here.

Also offering a vivid picture of postwar New York, though on a different stratum of society, is Frances and Richard Lockridge's *Murder Within Murder* (Pocket Books, \$2.95), a 1946 Mr. and Mrs. North entry with all the wit, sophistication, and careful plotting expected of its authors. The return of the Norths to paperback after a hiatus of several years unhappily coincides with the recent passing of their creator, Richard Lockridge.

Cornell Woolrich is also back in soft covers with two brooding suspense novels, *The Black Path of Fear* (1944), and *The Black Curtain* (1941), (Ballantine, \$2.25 each). Though his strongest points were style and atmosphere, Woolrich never forgot the mystery writer's duty to the reader of providing an intricate and surprising plot. Francis M. Nevins, Jr. offers illuminating Introductions to both volumes, which are to be followed by other Woolrich revivals.

Cyril Hare's 1950 novel *The Wind Blows Death* (Harper/Perennial, \$2.95)—British title, *When the Wind Blows*—a Francis Pettigrew case with the humorously observed background of a provincial orchestra, is a nearly perfect example of the best qualities of the classical British detective novel... Erle Stanley Gardner's *The Case of the*

Sunbather's Diary (Ballantine, \$2.25) is an average Perry Mason (high enough praise) dating from 1955—good wire-walking, nice plot complexities, but moments of stylistic carelessness typical of the author at this stage of his career... A very powerful 1969 Van der Valk case, *Tsing-Boum* (Vintage/Random, \$2.95), is among several Nicolas Freeling novels recently reprinted... And Pantheon's International Crime series continues to add distinguished titles to its list at \$2.95 each. Per Wahloo's 1966 novel *Murder on the 31st Floor* is a notable combination of Orwellian futuristic satire and detection, while James McClure's *The Caterpillar Cop* (1973) is a splendid early case for the South African police team of Kramer and Zondi.

*** G. J. A. O'Toole: *Poor Richard's Game*, Delacorte, \$16.95. Through the voice of lawyer and history buff Michael Croft, introduced in *The Cosgrove Report*, O'Toole offers both facts and speculations on an intriguing question: was Ben Franklin a British spy? Though this is not quite as good a work as its predecessor, there are plenty of interesting historical tidbits in the footnotes and scholarly apparatus, and the story has some inspired swashbuckling sequences that would not be out of place in a Douglas Fairbanks movie.

*** Edith Pinero Green: *Perfect Fools*, Dutton, \$11.50. In a spy-mystery farce sometimes reminiscent of Dorothy Gilman's Mrs. Polifax series, septuagenarian sleuth Dearborn V. Pinch must travel to

Cuba to bail son Benjamin out of trouble. Green delivers some funny scenes and characters and a fast pace. As detection, the novel is a bit disappointing, with the solution based on evidence unseen by the reader.

*** Eileen Dewhurst: *Curtain Fall*, Doubleday/Crime Club, \$10.95. Here is another that pretends to be a detective story, including even a full-dress reconstruction of the crime, but is more satisfactory viewed as romantic suspense. Murder strikes a British seaside variety troupe, and Scotland Yard's Neil Carter (in one of several unlikely moves) enlists fleeing housewife Joanna Stuart to help him investigate. Joanna's personal problem proves a more absorbing (and surprising) mystery than the whodunit.

** Marc Lovell: *Spy on the Run*, Doubleday/Crime Club, \$10.95. Lovell is always fun to read, but

the latest adventure of 6'7" British agent Appleton Porter requires too much suspension of disbelief, even for a semi-tongue-in-cheek thriller. Could Apple successfully impersonate a world-class distance runner even if the fix was in? The recent films *Chariots of Fire* and *Personal Best* have made track-and-field a hot background, but Lovell's climax here is more incredible than inspiring.

** Virginia Rich: *The Cooking School Murders*, Dutton, \$11.95. This dish could have used more stirring. The food talk (including recipes on the endpapers), the social observations, and the nostalgic small-town Middle American setting are all fine, but detective Eugenia Potter's individual murder scenarios for each suspect are a weak substitute for plot movement. Strong assets, strong liabilities—but I would approach another by this author with eagerness.

© 1982 by Jon L. Breen.



a **NEW Photographer story by**

JAMES HOLDING

In the February 24, 1982 issue of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Ellery Queen offered the following Challenge to the Author: "A plot idea for the next Photographer story: when Manuel Andradas, the Nullifier, looks at the name and address on the slip of paper handed to him by Rodolfo, he reads his own name and address. He has been given the assignment to nullify himself! How does the Photographer give positive proof to the Big Ones (no trick photo) of his own death, collect his murderer's fee, and still remain alive to tell the tale?"

James Holding immediately took up the awe-inspiring challenge and the following story is the result—an unforgettable chapter in the murky career of Manuel Andradas you will read with fascination from the first line to the last (no peeking) . . .

THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE FINAL PAYMENT

by **JAMES HOLDING**

They met at a secluded bench in the Jardim Botânico. The Photographer arrived first at the rendezvous. He was sitting quietly on the bench reading the latest edition of *Rio Illustrated*, his camera case on the bench beside him, when Rodolfo arrived.

Approaching the bench, seeing the Photographer's relaxed attitude, Rodolfo found himself wondering maliciously what the Photographer's reaction would be to his newest assignment. Rodolfo considered that the Photographer was getting a little above himself lately.

© 1982 by James Holding.

KEEP YOUR FRIENDS IN

SUSPENSE

ALL YEAR LONG!

Give **ELLERY QUEEN** this holiday season.

ELLERY QUEEN THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Everyone on your Christmas list who shares your enthusiasm for great mystery reading will welcome a gift subscription to **ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE**.

Each gift recipient gets over 2,000 pages of **ELLERY QUEEN's** outstanding detective fiction—in thirteen unique, distinctive Christmas “packages.” The first **ELLERY QUEEN** package goes under the tree—along with the gift announcement card we'll sign and send in your name. The others arrive regularly throughout 1983. And each is a reminder of your thoughtfulness, generosity and good taste. This kind of reminder is never too late.

**INEXPENSIVE...
AND EASY TO GIVE, TOO!**

While once-a-year holiday gift rates are in effect, the first **ELLERY QUEEN** subscription

costs only \$12.97. Each additional gift is even less—just \$11.00.

And you can complete your **ELLERY QUEEN** gift-giving in a matter of minutes. Just fill out the adjacent gift order card and we'll take care of all the details. If you prefer, call us with your order toll free: **1-800/247-2160, Operator #300. (In Iowa, call 1-800/ 362-2860.)** Then sit back and wait for the enthusiastic “thank-you's” that will soon be coming your way.

What won't soon be coming your way is our bill for your **ELLERY QUEEN** gift order. We'll hold off mailing that until after the holidays.

Even the postage on the order card is prepaid. We want to make this Christmas economical and effortless for you...merry and memorable for everyone on your gift list.

**Take a moment right now to send us
your **ELLERY QUEEN** gift list!**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Manuel Andradas, the Photographer, closed his magazine and looked up at the sound of Rodolfo's footsteps on the gravel path. "Ah," he said, "you are here." He made room for Rodolfo on the bench by placing his camera case between his feet. Rodolfo sat down beside him. "You have a new assignment for me, Rodolfo?" Manuel queried bluntly, getting down to business at once. "It has been a long time since the last one."

"Don't blame me or the Big Ones," Rodolfo answered. "There has been a slight recession, as our North American cousins phrase it, in this facet of the Corporation's business, that's all."

"I'd wondered if perhaps your people were dissatisfied with my work."

"Not at all. Just the opposite, in fact." Rodolfo lazily lit a cigarette and blew smoke out of his nostrils. Manuel waited patiently for him to speak. After all, Rodolfo, whose other name if he had one Manuel did not know, was his only link with the Big Ones, who provided him with some of his most profitable assignments.

At last Rodolfo's lips lifted in a grin. He took another puff at his cigarette, then said, "It's a rather curious assignment this time."

"So? I hope it's a man. As you know, nullifying women and children is distasteful to me."

"Oh, it's a man, all right—you don't need to worry on that score." Rodolfo chuckled.

"You are amused," Manuel said. "Why?"

"Presently you will know. First let us discuss price. Isn't that usually your principal interest?"

Manuel ignored the malice in the words. "Certainly," he said. "A man must live, Rodolfo. And photography, too, knows its recessions."

Rodolfo feigned sorrow. "Your abject poverty touches me deeply. What is your going price for eliminating a man today?"

"That depends, as you are well aware, on who I am to nullify, how important he is, and how difficult it will be to dispose of him quietly, without suspicion of foul play."

Rodolfo allowed himself a small sneer. "This one should be easy for you on all three counts. Therefore, the Big Ones have offered you two hundred thousand."

"Only two hundred thousand?" Manuel was unpleasantly surprised.

"You can, of course, reject this commission if you choose, and we shall find someone else to undertake it."

Manuel shook his head. "No. But who is the man? How can I judge the value—"

Unable to contain his delight any longer, Rodolfo interrupted. "You'll be lucky if you earn *half* that two hundred thousand fee. Look here." He deliberately made a business of extracting from his inside jacket pocket a small white card on which he had pencilled the name and address of Manuel's next victim. He pretended to catch his finger in the pocket. Then he clumsily dropped the card in his lap before he handed it to Manuel. "There you are. See for yourself." He laughed aloud, a whistling choking sound, his open mouth exposing yellowed teeth.

Manuel looked at the name on the card. For a long moment, he sat motionless.

When at last he looked up at Rodolfo, there was something in his eyes that caused Rodolfo to draw away from him a little on the bench. "Is this a joke?"

"Not so. The name on the card is your name, Photographer. The address is your address. The man the Big Ones are paying to nullify is you."

Reining his temper, Manuel said quietly, "I find this incredible. You are offering me two hundred thousand cruzeiros to nullify *myself*?"

"Not me. The Big Ones are offering you that sum."

Manuel smiled and leaned back on the bench. "Then, it is a joke. Of the 'physician heal thyself' variety, yes?"

"No. It is an actual assignment, commissioned by the Corporation on behalf of a client who desires your death. My superiors, of course, don't know your identity, that you are the man who does our, ah, nullifications for us. I alone know that. So what I am telling you is literal truth. Somebody wants you dead. And has paid the Big Ones to arrange it." He coughed. "Ironical, isn't it?"

The Photographer said, "Who? In my work for you I have never left the slightest clue that could point to me."

"So ask yourself," Rodolfo suggested kindly, "who *else* might want you killed. Perhaps someone with no connection at all to your work for us."

Manuel became lost in thought. He was quiet for so long Rodolfo guessed he had gone into mild shock. Enjoying himself thoroughly, he did not break the painful silence.

At length the Photographer said, "Perhaps I can think of one or two who might."

"Well, then?"

Manuel did not answer.

Rodolfo said, "I must also tell you that this client is more demanding than most, Photographer. He will not be satisfied that you are dead and pay us the other half of the agreed-upon sum until he has irrefutable proof that you have indeed been eliminated. Those are his own words: irrefutable proof."

"He wishes to see my dead body? Is that what he means by irrefutable proof?"

"Yes."

"Then he must be someone who knows me by sight?"

Rodolfo merely cleared his throat by way of answer.

"Ah, then, it becomes clearer, Rodolfo. Yes. What do you suggest?"

Rodolfo shrugged. "How do I know? I suppose it's a question of which you value most, your money or your life." He snickered.

"Exactly," said Manuel. "And I think—" he paused, then nodded sharply. "I think, Rodolfo, that in this odd situation I value money more."

Rodolfo half rose from the bench. "Are you mad? You'd actually kill yourself for a hundred thousand cruzeiros?"

"Two hundred thousand," Manuel said. "Wasn't that the offer? Half when I accept the assignment, the final payment when your client gets his irrefutable proof?"

Rodolfo said, "You will be unable to collect the final payment, I might point out. You will be dead."

"True."

"So you are not really serious, eh?"

"I *am* serious. I will send a friend to collect the final payment in my place."

"A friend?" Rodolfo was incredulous.

"What is so surprising about that? If I cannot enjoy the money myself, I can at least reward a dear friend of many years with my final earnings."

"Now you *are* joking."

"Unlike you, I do not joke about money, Rodolfo."

"This friend who will collect your money. What's his name? Or hers?" Rodolfo licked his lips.

Manuel ignored the question. "If I provide your client with irrefutable proof that I am dead, will you and the Big Ones honor your bargain? Will you pay my friend the remainder of my fee?"

"Well, of course. Certainly." Rodolfo was flustered. He cast an

uneasy glance at the Photographer, uncertain how to deal with a killer who had obviously taken leave of his senses. "But how can you supply the proof our client demands without—?"

"I shall determine that within the next day or two," said the Photographer. "And I shall then telephone you at our private number and give you detailed instructions as to when and where you must bring your client to view with his own eyes his 'irrefutable proof'."

Rodolfo regained his composure. "You are thinking of some mountebank's trick to keep your money *and* your life," he accused. "I warn you, the Big Ones will not countenance deception."

"They need not worry. Even you, Rodolfo, will acknowledge that I am dead, I think. And that the Big Ones can collect their fee in good faith."

Rodolfo shrugged. "It is your life, I suppose. And your money. Here." He handed Manuel a sheaf of banknotes. "I will await your telephone call with unusual interest."

Manuel slipped the cruzeiros into his pocket, handling the currency almost lovingly. Rodolfo watched him, making no attempt to mask his contempt. "You know," he said, rising, "I believe you *do* like money more than life."

"Why not?" said Manuel. "What good is either without the other?"

Two nights later, the short side street off Rua do Ouvidor near the flower market was very quiet and almost entirely shrouded in darkness. Only a few of the windows along the lane showed lights. The night sounds of Rio, the snarl of late traffic on Avenida Rio Branca only a few blocks distant, reached this backwater as a muted hum.

It was four minutes to midnight.

"When we get there," said Rodolfo to his client in a whisper, "Don't touch anything. Keep your hands in your pockets and just follow me. You understand?"

His companion nodded silently.

The two men approached Number 18 without any attempt at stealth or concealment. Nevertheless, both looked uneasily about them to be sure they were not observed.

The front door of Number 18 formed the back wall of a small entrance vestibule. Rodolfo and his companion stepped into this vestibule, melting thankfully into the shadows there. Rodolfo took a handkerchief from a pocket and wrapped it around his fingers

before touching the doorknob. He twisted gently, and the door opened before him into darkness. He nodded with satisfaction and whispered over his shoulder, "Not locked. As promised."

They went into the house and closed the door silently behind them. The darkness inside was inky. Rodolfo took out a small electric torch and let its beam guide them along a narrow inner hallway that ran the full depth of the house.

A quick stab of the flashlight ray into the first opening on their right disclosed what was obviously a photographic studio—a large barnlike room, high-ceilinged, containing only a clutter of cameras, reflecting screens on metal frames, painted background flats, and a cross-hatching of electrical cables on the floor. At the far end of the big room, a closed door bore the roughly lettered label DARK-ROOM.

They continued, cat-footed, along the hall, passing on their left a tiny den with books, a TV set, and an easy chair under a floor lamp, and then a miniscule kitchen with a few dirty dishes in the sink.

A closed door confronted them at the end of the hallway. "Ah," breathed Rodolfo, "this should be it. The bedroom."

"I don't like this," the other man said with a slight lisp. "I don't like any part of this."

"You think I do?" Rodolfo asked disdainfully. "It is just as distasteful to me, Senhor, as it is to you, believe me. I have never been this close, personally, to an assignment before. But you insisted, did you not, on irrefutable proof that the Big Ones have carried out your wishes?"

"Yes," said the other, "but—"

"Your irrefutable evidence lies behind this door." Rodolfo's apelike lips twisted in a contemptuous grimace. "If our—ah—agent met with success." His whisper carried a hint of uncertainty. Or was it curiosity?

"So let's get it over with, *por favor*."

Rodolfo nodded and opened the door with a handkerchief-shrouded hand.

At first the flashlight showed them only a chest of drawers against the wall directly ahead. The men stepped into the room softly, and Rodolfo sent his flashlight beam arcing to the right.

In an alcove to their left was a large double bed, a man in flowered pajamas sprawled on it, on his back, his bare feet entangled in the light coverlet that he'd evidently kicked to the bottom of the bed in

a violent awakening. His mouth gaped, his eyes were closed. His pajama top was stained with blood. The handle of a dagger protruded obscenely from his chest.

Rodolfo's companion gagged audibly, fighting nausea. He whispered urgently, "Turn off your light! I'm satisfied!"

Rodolfo tried to still the trembling that made his flashlight beam waver unsteadily. He took a deep breath and, swallowing harshly, asked, "Is that the man, Senhor?" He held the light on the bed as steadily as he could.

"Yes, yes—it is!"

"You're sure?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"And you're satisfied he's dead?"

"Of course! Look at him!" Rodolfo's client lisped nervously. "For God's sake! *Vamos!*" he repeated, "I'm satisfied!"

"I'm not," said Rodolfo in an odd voice. "I am charged by my superiors to make absolutely certain before we accept the balance of your payment, Senhor."

He advanced and pulled the curtains over the bedroom's single window. Then with his flashlight he located a light switch and flipped it. A bedside reading lamp winked on, illuminating the bed and its gruesome contents like a spotlighted tableau on a stage.

Rodolfo's client said hoarsely, "*Va bem*. It's him and he's dead. Let's go." He spoke more calmly now, beginning to recover from the trauma of his initial sight of the bed and its burden. In fact, Rodolfo detected a faint note of relief, even triumph, in his companion's voice.

"Give me a moment." Rodolfo stepped over to the bedside and stared down at the dead man. "The blood is very fresh," he murmured. "Do you see, Senhor? It seems he was—ah—taken care of quite recently. Our agent acted exactly on schedule."

"In fact," said the other man with a slight shiver, "our agent, as you call him, could still be in this very house at this moment."

Rodolfo gingerly touched the back of his hand to the bare arm of the victim below his short pajama sleeve. "No, Senhor, he will be far away by now. Come here and touch him, if you please. He already has the chill of death."

"No, thank you. I'm satisfied, I tell you. Let's get out of here. This whole thing gives me the creeps."

"It's what you wanted. Proof. Give me one more moment." There was an edge of anger in Rodolfo's voice. Nerving himself, he seized

the handle of the knife. Almost to himself he muttered, "Exactly in the heart, eh? No possible doubt. Unless there's no blade on this knife. Shall we see?"

Delicately he tugged the dagger out of the bloody flesh. It came reluctantly. He held it up for his companion's inspection. "*Tude bem!* A five-inch blade at the least, wouldn't you say? And dead center in the heart." With a sudden vicious movement, he reinserted the dagger's point into the mouth of the gaping chest wound and slammed the knife back in, hard enough to make the hilt smack audibly against the dead man's ribs and causing the corpse to jerk sharply on the bed's resilient mattress. "Now I am satisfied, too," Rodolfo said. He was breathing rapidly through his mouth as though after a hard run. "Let us leave, Senhor."

He switched off the bedside light and the two men left the room of death, retraced their steps to the front door, eased it open, and stepped out into the shadowed vestibule once more. Rodolfo closed the door carefully after them.

They regained the sidewalk that edged the narrow lane before Number 18 and turned toward Rua do Ouvidor. When at length they debouched into Avenida Rio Branca they entered a small all-night café together and, over *cafezinhos*, finished their business.

Rodolfo arrived early at the secluded bench. A slight breeze stirred the fronds of the palm trees behind it. White clouds floated serenely across an azure sky. Birdsong came to him from the nearby jaragua bushes, clothed now in their parti-colored pink-and-white blossoms. A trickle of water made a musical sound in the tile-lined drainage ditch beyond the footpath.

What a lovely day, he thought with satisfaction. And all the lovelier because he carried upon his person one hundred thousand cruzeiros in cash which he knew he could appropriate for his own should nobody appear to collect them for the dead Photographer.

The crunch of approaching footsteps disabused him of that hope. Somebody *was* coming to collect the Photographer's fee. Swallowing his disappointment, Rodolfo turned to get a glimpse of the Photographer's "dear friend."

A man came around the bend in the path and approached the bench, smiling. Rodolfo goggled at him. Broad sallow face. Squat powerful figure. Oversized hands. Camera case slung over one shoulder.

The Photographer.

Manuel sat down beside Rodolfo on the bench, placing his camera case between his feet on the ground.

"Nice day," he murmured, amused at Rodolfo's expression. "Don't stare so, Rodolfo. It's me. You have my money?"

Rodolfo was rendered temporarily speechless. He reached out a hand and pulled Manuel's jacket lapel aside, exposing an expanse of clean white shirt beneath it. When he saw a slight bulge under the shirt in the left breast area he seemed to recover somewhat. He drew a deep breath and asked in a shaken voice, "A bandage?"

"Of course." Manuel unbuttoned his shirt and drew it aside enough to show Rodolfo the pad of gauze bandage taped over his heart, then rebuttoned the shirt. He held out his hand. "My money?" he said.

Rodolfo stammered, "You—you said a friend would collect."

Manuel jerked a thumb at his chest in an exaggerated gesture. "True. And my friend's name is Manuel Andradas. I'm the best and only friend I have, Rodolfo. You know that."

Rodolfo said nothing.

Manuel said, "So give me the money. I earned it, didn't I?"

Rodolfo tried to gather his wits.

"I earned the money. So give it to me."

"But how is it possible you are here? I myself saw you with a knife in your heart."

Manuel nodded complacently. "Convincing, wasn't it?"

"And I repeated the blow to make sure you were not tricking me, as I suspected you would."

"I remember the blow, Rodolfo," Manuel said. "And I thank you for it."

Rodolfo stared uncomprehendingly.

"Give me the money I have earned, Rodolfo. I won't ask again."

Slowly Rodolfo took the money from his pocket and tossed it reflectively in his hand, saying, "*Did* you earn it though?" Rodolfo decided to ignore for the moment the astounding fact that the Photographer seemed to be alive and well and sitting beside him on a bench in the Jardim Botânico. "Did you earn it properly? So that the Big Ones can honorably accept payment from our client for your death?"

Manuel growled, "Of course! Your client has already paid you, has he not?"

"Yes, that same night, but—"

"And was he not thoroughly convinced that I was thoroughly dead?"

"You know he was. I was convinced myself. And I am not unacquainted with such things."

"Well, then?"

"It is not so simple as that, Photographer. Our client was convinced, as you say. And he paid us the agreed-upon price, it is true. But it should be obvious to you that that did not end the matter. I must point out to you that when you turn up alive, our client will hear of it. And when he hears of it, and finds it true, the Big Ones will be forced to refund his money and confess their failure to fulfill their contract with him."

"Ah," said Manuel, "That's what's troubling you, is it?"

"It is."

"Well, you need not be concerned." There was something feral in Manuel's tight grin.

"No?"

"Your client is no longer in a condition to complain to the Big Ones about anything."

"No?" Rodolfo asked again. He knew what was coming. "Why not?"

"He is himself dead," said Manuel casually. "I saw to it early this morning, realizing that he might present complications."

Rodolfo, fascinated, said, "How did you 'see to it'?"

"Unfortunately, his foot slipped off a curb on Avenida Rio Branca while he awaited a bus to Leblon. And the poor fellow went down under the wheels of the approaching bus. There were scores of witnesses."

"You among them?"

"Yes. I happened to be passing in the crowd when his foot slipped. In any event, he will not trouble the Big Ones with awkward questions about me."

Rodolfo restrained a shudder. "How did you know who he was?"

"I recognized his lisp when you brought him to view my body. However, I had already guessed who he was."

"Why did he wish you dead?"

"Probably to save himself money."

"Money?"

"I have been helping him these last three years, for a modest stipend, to preserve his marriage and his reputation."

"Blackmail, eh?"

"I never thought of it that way," said Manuel. "After I showed him the photograph I took of him with the three unclothed models from Club Carioca he asked for my help."

"I suppose you just happened to take that incriminating photograph in the course of your professional duties for *Rio Illustrated*?" Monumental sarcasm.

"Certainly," said Manuel with dignity. "You don't suppose I would photograph such subjects deliberately, do you? I was on assignment from *Rio Illustrated* to do a series on Club Carioca's floor show and I remained behind one night after the club closed to interview and photograph the leading danseuse. I stumbled on your client and his companions quite by accident." This was a long speech for the Photographer. He eyed the money in Rodolfo's hand.

Rodolfo passed the money to him. Manuel grunted with satisfaction. But when he stooped to place the bundle of cruzeiros in the camera case at his feet, Rodolfo caught his grimace of pain.

Rodolfo said, "Now that you have your precious money, aren't you going to explain the miracle of your death and rebirth? It's the least you can do to thank me for giving you the commission."

Manuel straightened. "It was really quite simple," he said, "the little trick I prepared for your client and you. Incidentally, I must compliment you, Rodolfo, for following my telephoned instructions so precisely. You and your client arrived at my studio exactly on time."

Rodolfo waved that away. "Go on."

"Twenty years ago," Manuel continued amiably, "I had my left lung removed surgically as the result of tuberculosis. Each year since, I have submitted myself, at my doctor's behest, to be X-rayed and stethoscoped extensively to determine the condition of my remaining lung. You can understand that when one has only a single lung it becomes rather important?"

Rodolfo merely nodded.

"Well, over the years, it appears from my X-rays, my heart has gradually moved laterally toward the center of my chest, appropriating some of the empty space left by my missing lung, you might say. So my heart is located not where it ought to be but near the middle of my chest. You see?"

Rodolfo drew in a sharp breath of disgust. "You didn't, therefore, even touch your heart with the dagger when you stabbed yourself?"

Manuel nodded. "Merely perforated a knot of gristle and scar tissue. It was painful, of course."

Rodolfo looked at the Photographer with the baffled air of a child who beholds for the first time a magician sawing a woman in half. "But I felt your skin!" he protested. "It had the clamminess of death!"

"Just of a bath of cold water," Manuel replied gruffly, "from which I emerged only minutes before you were due to arrive."

"And the blood?"

Manuel spread his hands. "A negligible loss for a full-blooded man like me. I was bandaging the wound a few minutes after you were safely away."

"But you weren't *breathing*," Rodolfo insisted. "I looked very closely to make sure of that before I asked our client to feel how cold your skin was."

Manuel said, "I was breathing. Before you came into the bedroom, while you were there, and, of course, more freely after you left." He slanted a sardonic look at Rodolfo. "I took several deep breaths while you closed my curtains. I took several more while you found the light switch. When the bedside light was on, I breathed through my mouth so shallowly with my one lung that your client could not possibly have detected any movement of my chest from ten feet away, which was as close to the bed as he came, despite your ill-advised invitation. He had already declared himself satisfied I was dead."

"I suspected a trick, as I told you," Rodolfo defended himself. "I wanted to satisfy *myself*."

"That's why you withdrew the knife and stabbed me again?"

"Yes." Rodolfo hesitated. "Why did you *thank* me for that blow just now?"

"It gave me another opportunity to breathe unobserved, that's all. I couldn't help the involuntary jerk of pain. But that movement masked my gasp for air."

"Suppose I had realized you were breathing?"

Impatiently, Manuel said, "May I point out to you, Rodolfo, that I didn't have to convince *you* I was dead—only your client. Which I did, the moment he saw me lying there with the knife in my heart. *Your* theatrics were unnecessary and stupid." Manuel fell silent and looked up lazily at the floating clouds. "It is my devout hope, Rodolfo," he said after a long pause, "that this assignment has been carried out to the Big Ones' satisfaction. That they will continue to use my services when necessary. And that they will pay me more adequately for my labor in the future."

Rodolfo said nothing.

"And furthermore," the Photographer went on, "it seems to me only fitting that since I saved the Big Ones from having to refund your client's money, they show me their gratitude by awarding me,

let us say, another hundred thousand cruzeiros from their own profits on the transaction. Do you think you can arrange that for me, Rodolfo?"

"How could I? Without disclosing your identity and your trickery?"

"Merely tell them I am demanding an extra hundred thousand for expenses."

"Expenses, for God's sake! What expenses?"

Manuel tapped his chest gently. "These bandages, for example. The little Turkish dagger I purchased for the charade. The cost of all those X-rays over the years. The surgeon's fee twenty years ago."

Rodolfo shook his head. "Impossible, Photographer. Don't press your luck."

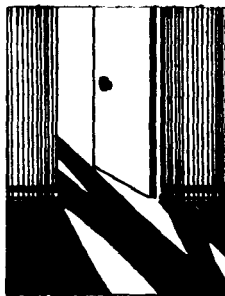
"My luck? This matter was not resolved by luck, Rodolfo. It was resolved by careful planning and resolute action." Manuel almost simpered.

"All the same, I'll never be able to get you another hundred thousand."

"Try," said Manuel with a flat relentless edge to his voice. He paused. Then, "Perhaps you can stimulate the generosity of the Big Ones by informing them of the solemn vow I have taken."

"What vow is that?"

"To carry through successfully every assignment they give me—" Manuel grinned suddenly "—even if it kills me!"



"All I need is a drug rap," Sid Gold said. "Stolen toys, okay. Stolen drugs, no way. Move the rig out . . ."

HIZZONER'S WATER SUPPLY

by GERALD TOMLINSON

Joe Skaggs hot-wired a Matador in a factory parking-lot in Paterson and took it on a roundabout back-street route to the rear of the Palladium Diner in Kearny, just off the Jersey Turnpike where he ditched it in front of a pair of green dumpsters. The smell from the dumpsters could hardly spur business at the Palladium Diner, but Skaggs was not there to eat. Pulling the collar of his windbreaker up against the October chill, he leaned into the frigid breeze and headed toward the area where the eighteen-wheelers were parked.

This stolen-car-to-truckstop routine was part of Skaggs' modus operandi. He researched his heists and followed the driver on his routes, observing his habits, sometimes for as long as three or four weeks. It was well worth it. The cargo in one of these trailers could pay for a lot of nights in Las Vegas—as long as he stuck to blackjack and avoided the slots. Of course, like any hijacker, Skaggs had to settle for a small fraction of the stolen goods' actual worth. *C'est la vie.*

He moved quickly along the asphalt, his shadow shifting in the glare of lights. The trucks were parked far away from the neon-bejeweled diner. The truck he was after, a Galen Lines rig, would be carrying a full load of electronic games and toys from a Baltimore factory to the stores of Boston just in time for the holiday season.

Skaggs knew nothing about electronic games and toys, but he did know how to drive a truck. After dropping out of Eastside High School, he had invested the modest haul from a gas-station holdup in a truckdriver-training course. The truckers' school, licensed though it was, taught him very little except the prevalence in the world of yet another scam. Even so, with the schooling behind him, he landed a job with a long-distance trucking outfit. The leathery

© 1982 by Gerald Tomlinson.

old driver he was teamed up with soon taught him how to handle a rig.

The work made him nostalgic for holdups. It took him hardly any time at all to discover that long-distance trucking could rattle your teeth out in two years and disembowel you in five. Not only that, but buying the rig that would jar loose your teeth and innards cost upward of fifty thousand dollars.

No, thanks. There had to be a better way—and Skaggs found it. Hijacking trucks, not driving them. When a hijacking was well planned, carefully timed, and boldly carried out, it paid off handsomely. Skaggs had a long-time reliable fence, the fence had a warehouse in the wilds of Secaucus, and the warehouse had a loading dock awaiting the arrival of the games and toys.

It should go without a hitch. Technically it wasn't even a hijacking, just a truck theft. The driver, Bernie Carbone, was by now anchored to a stool at the Palladium's counter, working his way through liver and onions, battery-acid coffee, and gluey red pie. Skaggs had studied Carbone's route and schedule and knew them down to the minute. He had a good half hour to cover the three miles to Secaucus, unload the truck, and drive it to his ditching point near Teterboro.

A jumbo jet, the kind copywriters have dubbed wide-bodies, thundered above him, its myriad lights gleaming, its nose aimed at Newark Airport. A bitter wind lashed Joe's face. He ignored the din and the knife-edged cold as he slipped alongside the trailer in Carbone's usual parking spot. This was it all right, the big kelly-green rig, its engine idling.

Skaggs swung easily into the cabover tractor, snapped on the lights, released the brakes, slid the rig expertly into gear, and pulled away. Nothing could be easier, he thought. He wondered why half the eighteen-wheelers at the Palladium didn't meet the same fate. No, not really—he knew better than that. A lot of the Palladium customers were long-distance haulers with a second trucker asleep behind the cab.

The big Galen Lines truck roared east on the Pulaski Skyway, then north on Routes 1 and 9, its headlights piercing the crystalline night. At the Secaucus exit Skaggs pointed the rig down gloomy back roads, past blackened factories and hulking warehouses, until, at the one he wanted, he whipped the wheel sharply to the left. A massive door slid open in the building he had reached, and almost

without slackening speed he disappeared into the waiting cavern. Down went the door.

He backed the trailer up to a long loading dock at one side of the building. On the platform stood half a dozen kids, eager and expectant, like something out of *Oliver Twist*, ready to set a Secaucus speed record for unloading a truck. To them it was late-night fun and fast bucks. Maybe it was even legitimate.

Beside them, looking tolerably like Fagin, stood Sid Gold, the reliable fence. Gold was a volatile little man pushing seventy, with a surprisingly stentorian voice for such a twerp. He had a cranium shaped like Mt. Kilimanjaro, complete with snow-capped peak. A strange elf was Mr. Gold, greedy but good-hearted in his way too, a manipulator par excellence, a man for whom the manipulation itself seemed to be the joy, the goal, the all-consuming passion. Not that he shied from driving a hard bargain. The bargains he drove were among the hardest, but they were also the safest.

A tough sprite if ever there was one, he had taken two big falls for fencing stolen goods while his suppliers, Skaggs and the others, never felt the heat. Gold seemed to pretend that the goods had fallen from heaven. He marveled at the existence of all that stolen stuff in his warehouse. He simply couldn't believe it, he told the judges. The judges had trouble believing it too.

Joe Skaggs jumped down from the cab and raced back to the dock. One of Gold's boys had begun to torch the lock and soon the doors swung open.

Gold stepped inside, nimble as a goat.

Ten seconds later he stepped out, back onto the dock, his wizened face drained of color, his deep voice issuing a command:

"Get this rig out of here."

Skaggs stared at him, startled.

"What?"

"Take a look."

Worried, Skaggs vaulted to the dock and examined his cargo. Electronic games and toys it was not. Every carton in the trailer, front to back, top to bottom, said BLISS in blue block letters on white cardboard. Below the trade name, in smaller type, appeared "Berkowitz Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Upper Darby, Pa."

"I don't get it," he said to Gold. "This is Carbone's truck."

"Get it out of here."

"Hey, Sid. Are you kidding? Bliss is worth—"

"Can it. Bliss is worth zero to me. Worse yet, it's a prescription

drug. A strong tranquilizer, somewhere between Valium and Thorazine, I think. That's all I need is a drug rap. Stolen toys, okay. Stolen drugs, no way. Move the rig out."

"Listen, Sid—"

"Nothing doing, pal." As he said it, a big gorilla named Bannon moved to his side and started glowering. Gold, who had the strength of a toothpick, needed an enforcer, and Bannon was his man. Bannon slammed and latched the truck doors. Gold said, "Get that load of tranquilizers on the road. Quick."

"I've got to fence it."

"You can't fence it, Skaggs. You got no contacts in the drug trade. Don't be stupid. Ditch the truck and get clear of it as fast as you can."

"Sid, it's worth a fortune, this load! I've got enough Bliss here to tranquilize the East Coast for a month!"

"It's your problem, pal."

Gold turned on his heel, motioning Bannon and the kids to follow him. A moment later the huge warehouse door yawned quietly open.

Skaggs, struggling to stay calm, rammed the transmission into gear and roared out into the smelly Secaucus night. He careened to the left, just as he would have done with an empty truck, heading toward Teterboro.

He had to think, but thoughts gridlocked in his brain. What should he do? Here he was hauling a fortune in the prescription drug Bliss. There had to be a market for it. But Sid Gold was right. Skaggs had never dealt in drugs, and he had no place to turn.

He made good time to Teterboro. Traffic was light, the traffic lights were on his side, and no patrol cars of any kind showed up ahead of him or behind him. He rolled onto a side road he had picked to abandon the empty rig.

And then he thought of it! Just as he was pulling to a stop in an ad-hoc truck-parking area, just as he saw the blue-and-white pay telephone, he recalled his angry remark to Gold: "I've got enough Bliss here to tranquilize the East Coast for a month!"

Yeah! Why not? Maybe not the whole East Coast, when you got right down to it. Maybe only one city—say, New York City.

Skaggs whistled. The pieces fell into place. He had practically been born to the job. Why hadn't he thought of it before? He'd been born and raised in Kingston, New York, a town a few miles east of the vast Ashokan Reservoir, one of more than twenty main sources of drinking water for New York City.

Forget selling the stuff. Skaggs' new game was blackmail. He would park the rig near the shore of Ashokan Reservoir—hidden from view, of course—he knew every foot of the desolate shoreline—and then demand—how much? A million dollars? No, he should take inflation into account. Make it three million. Pay Joe Skaggs three million dollars, Mr. Mayor of New York, and your citizens can go on drinking water from the tap. Refuse to pay it and—ha!

But he needed time. He needed it desperately. Light traffic or not, it would take him a good two hours and forty-five minutes to drive to Ashokan Reservoir. Long before that, Bernie Carbone would have wiped his chops at the Palladium Diner and alerted the state police. The Galen Lines rig, even with all the luck in the world, would never get through to Newburgh, never mind Kingston.

But Skaggs still had an ace to play. He liked to think he always had a spare ace. This ace's name was Suzy, and she waited on tables at the Palladium Diner. A few years ago Joe and Suzy had a thing going, but then Joe got busted for hauling hot cigarettes, Suzy met a Purolator driver, and the affair was off. But they stayed friends. Suzy knew about Joe's heists, even though they rarely took place at the Palladium. That this one had could save the day.

He phoned the Palladium and asked for Suzy. The manager had a strict rule about personal phone calls, but it got violated about six times a night. Over the clatter of dishes Skaggs heard her thin, sweet voice. "Hi." It sounded questioning.

"Suzy, baby. This is Joe—yeah, Joe Skaggs, not one of the other ten Joes you know. Hey, Suzy, I've got a job for you."

"Terrific. What does it pay? Can I give notice?"

"I mean it, baby. Is Bernie Carbone still there? . . . Yeah, I know he's good-looking. You been sweet-talking him a little? . . . Listen, could I ask you to do a little more than that? For pay?"

Suzy said, "Joe, I like you, but I draw the line at that. I got me a steady guy now."

"No, no, no, Suzy. Nothing like you're thinking. Just a mickey to give the poor guy some rest. He's working too hard. Maybe some of your Fiorinal would help. You're still using it, aren't you? Slip three or four of them in his coffee while you're gazing deep in his eyes and telling him he's the trucker of your dreams. Keep him in the diner, away from the parking lot. I need three hours, baby. And, hey, I'll never ask you to do it again. Just this once. It's worth a hundred bucks."

He heard her breathing into the mouthpiece for a while. "It's worth more than a hundred, Joe."

"Two."

"Three. A hundred dollars an hour. That's only fair."

Skaggs' knuckles whitened around the receiver. Yeah, but what can I do? he thought. "Okay, three. You got it. Just don't mess up. If he walks out of that greasebin before three A.M., yours truly is back in the coop."

"I'll do it, Joe. You know how I like you."

"Yeah."

He slammed down the receiver, remounted his cab, pored over the New Jersey and New York road maps from the glove compartment, and took off.

He had cause to worry. Suzy might or might not come through. If she blew it, he could expect to see the state police soon, probably before he reached the New York State line, certainly before he reached the reservoir. As the truck rumbled north on Route 17, he realized all too vividly where he should have been—back in Paterson counting money, phoning his travel agent to book him on a flight to Vegas. Instead he was jockeying a stolen eighteen-wheeler north, hoping, imploring that Suzy was earning her three hundred dollars.

The cab of Carbone's truck looked like the cockpit of a jet airplane. Anything electronic that was available to truckers, Bernie had it. Communication to and from the outside world was well provided for, but Skaggs would use a pay phone to call the mayor with his three-million ransom demand.

As the minutes passed and the miles rolled by, it began to look as if Suzy had done her job. Skaggs continued to bowl north on 17 and then, past Harriman, on 9W. He never received more than a bored glance from the few troopers he saw, never heard anything bothersome on the CB. He kept wheeling. No interruptions. He was beyond Newburgh now. He could hardly contain his elation. He was going to make it. Less than fifteen miles more. They were fingernail-chewing miles, but they passed. Ten. Five. And there he was in Ashokan.

He peeled triumphantly off 9W onto Route 28, and then onto the well remembered back road of his childhood. *You can go home again!* he thought, finding the spot he had pictured in his mind, steering the rig off the road, across the packed earth, and trundling it down behind a dense stand of hemlocks. He backed and maneuvered the

trailer into a small clearing, almost a natural garage, where it couldn't be seen from the road or the reservoir.

Time to get some rest, he told himself. There was no need to repeat the advice, no need to hasten it with Bliss. Within moments he was sound asleep, dreaming of the Vegas Strip, of aces and face cards, of chips and chippies.

He awoke with a start. The sun was up, glinting off the rippled surface of Ashokan Reservoir. Bluejays chattered outside the cab. When he opened the door, a rabbit bounded away through the trees.

Today meant action, no time to waste. No matter how much Fiorinal Suzy had slipped to Bernie Carbone, the guy had come around by now and was shouting his loss to the world. It was time for Skaggs to follow up on that loss—which would probably get a little news coverage—with his own update, his own tough but reasonable request: Give me three million dollars, Mr. Mayor, and we can part friends. If you refuse, I'll turn the city into a simpering, spaced-out bunch of walking zombies.

There was a diner two miles back with a pay phone outside. He needed both. He walked the two miles, his windbreaker collar pulled up, passing half a dozen bare-legged joggers on the way. He hoped they stuck to the highway and didn't go wandering down among the sheltering hemlocks.

After a breakfast of bacon and eggs and toast, he put in a long-distance call to Sam ("My Door Is Always Open") Hoffman, mayor of New York. He got a flunky on the other end. He demanded the mayor and got an argument from the flunky.

Skaggs said, "Listen, Gofer, I'll tell you where we stand. I'm sitting at the edge of a New York reservoir. A big one. Now what I'm suggesting is this—a truckload of Bliss in the reservoir. Got it? You want to drink water down there in New York? Go ahead. Put on a happy face. Go bonkers on Bliss.

"Now, let me tell you, Gofer—and get it straight—there's a way around this. It's spelled m-o-n-e-y. It adds up to three million dollars. That's what I want. That's what it'll take to keep New York's Finest and everybody else in town from floating off to dreamland.

"I know you can't raise that kind of money yourself—you're on the mayor's coffee run and they hardly ever slip you a briefcase full of money—so let's leave it at this: you tell Sam Hoffman that I called. Tell him I'll call again in a couple of hours. Tell him to think of that three million bucks and to weigh it against seven million members

of the Undead he's going to get otherwise. Okay? Good boy! Over and out."

He felt pleased about that talk even if he hadn't gotten the mayor's ear. He soon would get it. Meanwhile, he had time to kill. It was a four-mile round trip to the rig and he saw no reason to be traipsing back and forth between his fortune and the phone. He walked a short distance on a side road, sat down on a bale of hay, tried to ignore the autumn chill, and wished he had brought a pack of playing cards.

In two hours he tried phoning the mayor again. This time the flunky put him through to an aide.

"I want the mayor," Skaggs told the aide.

"You're speaking to Tom Feeney, you've probably heard of me. I'm an aide to the mayor. I can relay any message to him that's important."

"Well, listen, Tom. This message is important—I'm not trying to become a telephone pal of you folks. I've got a truckload of Bliss . . . yeah, the truck from Kearny. . . and I'm getting ready to flip the stuff in Hizzoner's water supply. It's going to cost him three million in used hundred-dollar bills to keep that water pure. To keep it from fuzzing up lads' and lasses' minds so that they all start thinking they're oh too wonderful for words—"

"Hold it a minute," Feeney snapped. "I don't know whether you're a crank or a clown or a wig, but let me tell you this: the mayor has a few real problems to deal with this week. You may have heard. The garbage strike. The inmates' riot at Riker's Island. The bombing of a Russian diplomat's car on Second Avenue. The downgrading of the city's bonds. He doesn't need any bubbleheaded threats about Bliss in the city's water supply. I mean, I'll tell him you called. And I'll let the police commissioner in on our little secret. But my guess is you're not going to get a single greenback dollar."

Skaggs said slowly, "Tom, you're making one big bad error in judgment. I can turn a lot of minds to mush. When you chat with your boss, you tell him that. I'm through dealing with second and third bananas. Unless the mayor himself comes on radio and television tonight—"

"You're in luck, Mr.—"

"Keep talking."

"He's having a press conference at nine o'clock tonight to discuss the garbage strike and other matters. It'll be on TV and radio."

"Hey, fantastic, Tom. No need to be so formal about it, but it's his choice. You tell him to promise me the three million at that press conference, and I'll be in touch with him—or even you—to make the arrangements. All will be fine at the old water hole. If he *doesn't* promise the money, then, well, I'm sorry, but it's Bliss in the drink by midnight. You can count on it, I'm ready to unload. I'll be tuned in at nine."

"How do we know you've even got the Bliss?"

"I've got Bernie Carbone's rig, Tom. With the leopardskin seat covers and the diagonal crack in the lower left windshield. New Jersey license 397 XRV. Sound right? You bet."

"The police are looking for you right now, my friend. They'll find you before nine o'clock."

"You know better than that, Tom. There are reservoirs scattered all over the state. They'll never find me in time."

Feeney warned, "The mayor may not say anything about this on the air."

"He'd better. Otherwise it's going to be Happy Hour all over New York for a long, long spell. Understand?"

"I'll keep it in mind. I'll talk with the mayor this afternoon."

"I'll be tuned into the nine o'clock news conference. He agrees, or I fling pills."

"I heard you the first time. Something else—"

"Nothing else, Tom." Skaggs hung up. It would be dumb to be traced on the phone through long-windedness.

He started back toward the rig, confident the mayor would spring for three million dollars rather than risk watching the Big Apple turn into the Big Lullaby. He knew the mayor was a gutsy sort, up against it, up against his critics all the time. He knew that with his temper and temperament, he wouldn't take kindly to blackmail, but what choice did he have? Did he want liquid Bliss spouting from the tap? He'd have to agree to Skaggs' terms for the health and safety of the voters.

Back in the cab, Skaggs leaned back and waited patiently. He munched on sandwiches he'd bought from the diner. He listened to the multispeaker stereo AM/FM and some of the country-and-western tape decks. He had no need to listen carefully until nine o'clock.

Late in the afternoon a couple of helicopters whirled low overhead, back and forth, back and forth, but they had no real hope, if that was their mission, of picking out the green rig under the green hemlocks.

As the hour approached, Skaggs found himself feeling a little nervous. What if Tom Feeney hadn't relayed the message? What if they didn't really believe he was the man with the Bliss? What then?

Nine o'clock.

The mayor spoke. He talked about the garbage strike. He went on and on. The negotiations were a mess, he said, just like the streets and just as smelly. He sounded haggard. He mentioned Riker's Island. The situation was worse than they thought—one guard had been killed, another mutilated. He sounded teary. He deplored the bombing of the Russian diplomat's car. It had been illegally parked, undiplomatically ticketed, and blown to smithereens. There were casualties. He sounded contrite. He tried to gloss over the downgrading of the city's bonds, but a newsman hounded him. Yes, he admitted he had heard about it and he was disappointed. He sounded angry.

Another newsman asked, "Wasn't there a phone conversation this morning with the man who stole the truckload of tranquilizers over in Jersey?"

The mayor took his time answering. "You know," he said thoughtfully, "things are falling apart in this city. There is a quiet rage growing in many of us. We would like to forget our fears, our concerns. But we can't. So here, this morning, we have this very odd character, no doubt from out of town, who wants to blackmail us into clearheadedness. He wants to charge us three million *not* to forget our cares and worries. Is he crazy? Has he walked across Forty-second Street? I say, let's smile again, New York. Let's have a ball. To that poor misguided hijacker, wherever he is, I say (*bleep*)".

Laughter.

"Does that mean no, Mayor?"

"That means no, fellows. No ransom money. So there—go to work, you phantom pill-pusher in the big green truck. Do your worst. Anything else?"

"About the threatened transit strike, Mayor—"

But Skaggs was not listening. He already had the back of the truck open. His breath came like puffs from a steam locomotive. His face was the color of a turnip. He had said he would dump it all by midnight.

At six in the morning, with the first streaks of dawn lighting the sky, he was still opening cartons and pill bottles, his fingers torn

and bleeding. His face had gone from purple to ashen, but his resolve burned on. At six-thirty he heaved the last fistful of Bliss into the water and dropped down beside the reservoir, beaten, bloodied, and exhausted. He fell asleep on the dewy grass. He had not taken a single pill himself.

New Yorkers went on about their lives as usual. They did not rush to buy bottled water. They did not flee the city for the tainted wells of New Jersey or Connecticut. They stayed, they laughed, they loved, they drank.

And Bliss reigned.



DETECTIVERSE

OVERTIRING UNDERTAKING

by MARK GRENIER

Said an auto-parts thief known as Austin:
"At the prices that mufflers are costin'
I can earn a good deal
For each one that I steal—
But I frequently find it exhaustin'."

© 1982 by Mark Grenier.

a **NEW** short story by

JEAN DARLING

There had been a black frost on the ground the night, seventeen years before, when John Slattery had presented the six-year-old waif to his wife—in much the same fashion as Earnshaw had sprung Heathcliff on his family. Sullen and dark, the child was every bit as unlovable as his literary counterpart . . .

I NEVER SAW HIS FACE

by JEAN DARLING

The large elegant marts on Dublin's fashionable South Side employed expensive security—closed-circuit TV, uniformed men on every door—but still the robbers struck, professional as well as amateur. Thieves were hitting the small unguarded markets too, the inexpensive venues where stall-holders sold stamps, coins, medals, postcards—anything antique from buttons to jewelry. The wares were displayed in portable glass cases or beneath plastic sheets, at best frail protection against agile fingers or organized crime. Only the unpretentious Collector's Fair on the wrong side of the River Liffey had thus far managed to escape.

Even so, some of the less sanguine stall-holders kept easily reachable blackjacks under their tables, and one of the dealers in gold coins had started wearing a pistol tucked in his belt like a riverboat gambler in the Nineteenth Century. But middle-aged Mary Slattery, who presided at the second table on the left of the entrance, remained unarmed.

Every Saturday morning on the dot of ten she arrived with an attaché case holding several thousand pounds' worth of stamps, both mint and used, arranged in see-through slots on black cards. These were lined up on a white tablecloth under the glow of two sixty-watt

© 1982 by Jean Darling.

bulbs and covered with a length of transparent plastic. Three pair of stamp tongs, two magnifying glasses, and a swarm of small envelopes were then set out beside a green cashbox and at ten-fifteen exactly, Mary Slattery was open for business.

When her husband John was alive, they had both been regulars at the Collector's Fair just off O'Connell Street, Mary selling stamps at one end of the table, John valuing collections and buying in stock at the other.

Except for attending a half dozen or so important fairs like WIPA in Vienna and Philatelia in Frankfurt, Slattery curtailed his buying in of material to the Saturday/Sunday stall in Dublin. Mostly he purchased collections to be broken up into lots for the twice-yearly auctions he conducted by mail on a worldwide basis. The rest of his week generally flew by, every minute occupied in grading and describing stamps with such accuracy that far-flung collectors sent him bids with complete confidence.

Occasionally he took a day or two off to putter along the coast in his eighteen-foot cabin cruiser, the *Kathleen Bawn*. As Mary hated to set foot on anything that floated or flew, his little holidays had been solitary diversions until Liam was big enough to crew for him. And so the years had slipped by, the preparation of catalogues and the processing of orders leaving little or no time for the cultivation of friends. Nor did they have any children—unless Liam could be considered a son.

There had been black frost on the ground the night, seventeen years before, when John had presented the six-year-old waif to his wife—in much the same fashion as Earnshaw had sprung Heathcliff on his family. Sullen and dark, the child was every bit as unlovable as his literary counterpart, but to John he was the son he had never been able to have. Because of this, Mary accepted the child—albeit grudgingly.

In the beginning she had hoped Liam would take an interest in philately and eventually take some of the work off John's shoulders. But as the lad grew up his interests on shore lay in outdrinking, outracing, and outwomanizing the unsavory gang with whom he spent his time. And John was no help, spoiling and cossetting him, granting his every wish—including the Honda the boy wanted for his eighteenth birthday.

While John was alive the auctions were viable, even profitable. Then one evening he went over to Kelly's, the news agent at the

corner, for cigarettes. A few minutes later Mrs. Kelly was pounding at the door.

"There was nobody in the shop and I happened to be watching John as he came across the street. I saw it all! The car hit him and raced on—didn't even slow up!"

As soon as the funeral was over, Liam sent out notices canceling the forthcoming auction, stapling them to invoices requesting immediate payment of all outstanding accounts. Mary was grateful for his help as long as he treated her with respect. But as time separated Liam from John's influence, he grew preoccupied and short-tempered.

Then one grey evening several months after John's death, the confrontation came.

"We've got to sell the house," Liam said without preamble, returning home and slumping unshaven into a kitchen chair. "I've thought it through. There's no other way except to sell and go away."

"Your meal's in the oven," Mary said, unable to hide her annoyance. "It'll be all dried out now, you're so late."

Liam removed the plate from the oven with a towel-wrapped hand and sat down again.

"Always the same, sausage and mash—always the same ever since Da died."

"You know I've no heart for cooking—"

"I have a buyer," he interrupted. "He'll pay cash."

"I don't know what you're on about, Liam. I've no intention of selling this house. The three-thousand insurance John left is a pittance these days, even with my widow's pension."

"If you sell the house you'll have plenty to get by on. You can move to a warm climate. With your arthritis you should jump at the idea."

"I'm not selling and that's that." Mary's voice was flat with finality.

Liam pushed his plate away, his face flushed. "Da left half of everything to me, so I have some say in the matter. I say we sell."

"Where does it say John left you anything? Where does it say? There was no will—even the thought of making a will drove him wild, you know that."

"Will or no, Da left me half!"

Mary was angry now, no longer able to mask the dislike she felt for the youth. "John took you off the streets from God knows where! He fed you, clothed you, and educated you as best he could but there

was no adoption—nothing legal!” Her mouth snapped shut. She didn’t want to express her resentment at his intrusion into their marriage. An unnecessary intrusion, for she could have had a child. The memory of the back-street room where she had made her choice flashed in her mind. She had called the turn, so how could she blame Liam? She softened.

“Look, Liam, let’s not fight. I’ve no thought of turning you out. This is your home as long as you wish to stay—”

“How come when there’s ‘nothing legal?’” His voice was tight.

“You can sell the boat for all I care, I never want to see it again, but shut your mouth about the house,” she lashed out.

“I’ve had an offer for it—thirty thousand pounds, cash. Look, you can have it all. But you’ve got to *sell*!” Liam shouted, all pretense of civility shattered. Mary looked at him, then without speaking she poured tea into her cup. She didn’t see his hand draw back until it was too late to avoid the full force of the blow. “Can’t you get it through your head? You’ve *got* to sell! There’s no other way!” He stood for a moment looking down at her, then the door slammed and he was gone.

Automatically, Mary rose and cleared the table. What in the world am I going to do? she wondered. He was so big and strong he could kill her if he wanted to. Then he’d have everything—house, stamps, the lot—and there was no way she could stop him. Unless she went to the Garda Síochána. But the police never did anything until a crime was committed, they couldn’t be expected to concern themselves with a middle-aged woman’s fear.

She thought of the times she had warned Slattery about Liam and he had fallen back on the old saw “boys will be boys.” But that didn’t mean he shouldn’t be neat in his dress, Mary had countered. It didn’t mean he should cut school or, when he was older, not try to find a job.

“He has a job with me,” John had said, adding, “Don’t worry, everything’s under control.” Surely if Slattery had been in control Liam would have learned something about stamps. And what was this mysterious job? Crewing on the boat? And now, with his protector scarcely cold in his grave, the devoted foundling had turned on her like a rabid animal.

Mary examined her cheek in the hall mirror. Three thick stalks of red shone on the white flesh. Of course, she could give him half the stamps along with the *Kathleen Bawn*—half the stamps in number not in value—then maybe he’d get off her back about the house.

But if she did that and he left for good, her last earthly contact with her husband would be gone. She would be alone.

Perhaps she should try to make friends with him, forget her resentment and dislike. Perhaps it was the darkness of him that turned her off, his sallow skin and the heavy brows that met over his black eyes. He was so big and un-Irish looking. Perhaps that was it, Mary being "a pocket-sized cuddle of a colleen" according to her husband—an image she carefully guarded over the years so that Slattry never would feel the urge to stray. And he never had—he had adored her, his only criticism having been a comment he made the week he brought Liam into their home, that she had a failing she should look to—a tendency to judge a book by its cover. The failing of course being his own, Mary thought then and now, in his lack of perception.

Even at fifty she was attractive, her hair still auburn and her face relatively unlined. Perhaps if she had been rounder, more the motherly type, the chasm between her and Liam wouldn't have existed. But now that Liam was every bit as alone as she was, past grievances should be forgotten, she thought, smoothing pale foundation carefully over the angry marks on her cheek. She dabbed her lashes with mascara, applied some lipstick, and studied her reflection. I'll change into the dark-blue silk dress with the little white collar, she thought.

When she was satisfied that she looked presentable, Mary sat down to watch television until it was closing time at the pubs, at which time Liam usually came home. She hoped he wouldn't have taken too much drink so that they could talk coolly about him joining her at the market. He didn't have to know anything about philately to sell stamps and collector's accessories. He could preside at her end of the table while she took on the responsibility of buying in stock so that the merchandise wouldn't dwindle away.

But Liam didn't come home that night or the next or the next. Then it was Saturday and she was sitting behind the table, second on the left of the entrance, at the Collector's Fair.

Business was slow and, as always happened when customers were few and far between, the stall-holders gravitated toward each other, posturing and showing off new treasures. They bargained together through the long dull afternoon. Three o'clock came, then four, then five, and it was time to start packing up for the day.

It was then the robbers appeared from nowhere.

There was no warning. Suddenly three men wearing balaclava helmets were in the room. Each one was over six feet tall and the one who led the way held a knife in his fist. "Nobody moves, nobody gets hurt," he said, his voice hoarse with menace, while the other two began scooping coins and jewelry into rucksacks. Jerry, the armed dealer in gold, who had been in the midst of packing, edged behind the lid of his open case, his hand feeling for the gun. Mary screamed.

"Shut her up," the leader ordered and the man closest to Mary's stall moved to obey. He slid behind the table and as he started to cover her mouth the breath caught in her throat and she slipped to the floor.

He bent over her. "Stay quiet and you won't be hurt," he whispered in a voice soft as the mists of Killarney. "Sure it's only a ski mask. Don't be afraid. Here, I'll help you slide under the table where it's safe."

"What do you care if I'm safe? You'll be taking my stamps no matter what," Mary said—but she let him shove her further under the table.

"You remind me of my sainted aunt," he said and was gone in answer to his leader's shout to hurry and clear her table. Then all hell broke loose.

Jerry, having reached his gun, fired point-blank at the man systematically bagging his gold, and the man, clutching his shoulder, dropped the bulging sack. Coins splashed across the floor.

The antique salesman jumped at the leader and received the knife blade between his ribs. As in a motion-picture dream sequence all sense of reality was gone—people began to shout, to kneel at the victims' sides on the coin-spangled rug. Sirens wailed to a stop and a Garda patrolman fished Mary out from under the table and turned her over to a paramedic in the ambulance outside. The men had escaped with the heavy cloth bags.

After a night at the Meath Hospital, Mary was allowed to go home—to a house still empty of Liam. She had just checked out all the rooms and dispiritedly put the kettle on when the front bell rang. She looked through the spy hole. A uniformed man was at the door and another was coming up the walk. A squad car was parked at the curb.

"Yes?" Mary said, not unchaining the door until the sergeant showed his identification.

"We brought your case," he said as she led the way to the kitchen. On seeing it, Mary felt a pang. It would be the first Sunday in fifteen years that she was not at the Collector's Fair. But then, she realized, neither would be anyone else.

The antiques salesman, the sergeant—named Fallon—told her, was resting comfortably, the knife having missed any vital organ. The thief Jerry had winged was on the way to Bridewell, where he would be invited to assist the police with their investigations. The other two men were still at large and none of the stolen goods had been recovered.

"This is my partner, Michael Sheehy," Sergeant Fallon said. "He'll be taking down your statement."

Over tea and buttered soda bread Mary answered their questions but all she was able to add to the testimony of other witnesses was the exchange between her and the man who had helped her under the table. When pressed, she admitted he was tall, "But they were all tall and wearing those things over their faces," she said.

"Surely you can recall some detail about—"

"All I remember is him saying I reminded him of his sainted aunt."

"Can you describe his voice?"

"He was whispering. You can't tell anything from a whisper."

"Whispering wouldn't hide an accent. Could you say if he was a Dublin man? Cork? Donegal?"

As Mary was trying to recall, the back door opened and Liam walked in.

"Ah, Liam, it's you," she said, and introduced him to the policemen.

Fallon explained what had happened.

"Look," Liam said. "Can't all this wait until she's had a bit of a rest? She looks very tired to me."

"Perhaps you're right, Mr. McCann," Fallon said. The patrolman closed his notebook and the two men rose to leave. "Your mother will probably be called upon to come down to Pearse Street Station to help us identify—"

"If you catch anyone to identify," Liam interrupted.

"You're right, Mr. McCann, but you never know your luck," Fallon said, studying him, noting the foreign appearance so unlike that of the woman. "Well, good day to you. Feel better, Mrs. Slattery."

"Are you hungry," Mary asked.

Liam sat at the uncleared table and shook his head. "No, I'm not hungry."

Mary sat opposite him. "So where have you been since—"

"I'm sorry, Mary," he said, reaching across the table and touching her arm.

"About what?" Mary asked, looking at his hand. He removed it.

"Losing my temper—slapping you. I know I was wrong to think you'd sell the house just like that."

"You know perfectly well I'll never leave Dublin. I never have and I'm too old to emigrate now."

Liam looked at her for a long time. "You say you've never left Dublin. What about the trip you made to London?"

Mary flushed and mentally rifled through past lies. At last she selected the simple denial.

"In March 1957 you spent the better part of a day in a second-floor flat on Longacre Street by Covent Garden Market. You were so ill your friend Maureen was worried she would be implicated if you died so she put you in a cab." His eyes held hers. "The driver took you to a small theatrical hotel off Tottenham Court Road and you stayed there until you were well enough to come home."

Though stunned that he knew, Mary held to her denial that she had never been out of Ireland.

"Had you not left Ireland John would've had a proper son and I wouldn't be here," Liam said. "In 1958 Da was hired to catalogue a private collection of Irish and British Commonwealth stamps for a Belgian—"

"That's not true. John never stayed away overnight until he got the *Kathleen Bawn*," Mary denied, firm in her belief that a lie well stuck to is as good as the truth.

"He stayed near the Guild Square at the Hotel Fabiola—he sent you that postcard you have framed on the bedroom wall. The copy of Bruegel's painting of the Square made four or five hundred years ago. You know as well as I do the only reason he took the job in Antwerp was because of your trip to London. The thing he wanted most in the world was a family, and after finding out about—well, he needed time away."

"Who was it spread the lies about me?"

"Maureen Hennessy, the same one who put you in the cab. One night she had too much to drink and came over to Da in the pub."

"On her mother's grave she swore never to tell." Mary spoke so softly Liam had to strain to hear her. Then she looked up. "All right, I admit it. So what? It's all over and done."

"No, Mary, it's not over and done. That's what I'm trying to tell

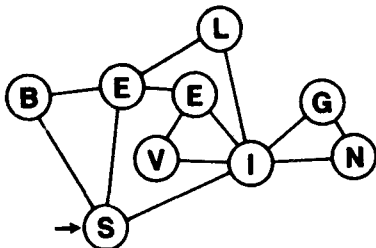
A NEW DIMENSION...

(OF FUN!) If you enjoy solving ingenious puzzles, come into the fascinating world of GAMES Magazine!

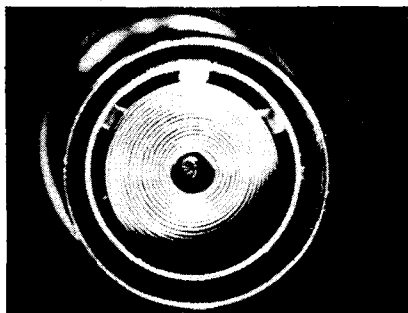
1. Each equation contains the initials of words that are needed to complete it. Find the missing words. For example, 36 = I. in a Y. would be 36 = Inches in a Yard.

- a. 20,000 = L.U. the S.
- b. 13 = C. in a S.
- c. T.D. (and a P. in a P.T.)
- d. 9 = I. in a B.G.
- e. 9 = P. in the S.S.
- f. 30 = D.H.S.A.J. and N.
- g. 50 = C. in a H.D.
- h. 212 = D. at which W.B.
- i. 1 = D. at a T.
- j. 12 = S. of the Z.

2. Begin at the arrow and proceed from letter to letter in any direction via connecting lines to form a familiar saying. Every line and letter will be used one or more times.



3. WHAT IS THIS FAMILIAR OBJECT?
Clue: Hot tip



As a reader of science fiction, you pride yourself on your cleverness, your ingenuity, and your terrific imagination. That's why we want to introduce you to GAMES—the magazine that's every bit as clever and ingenious as you are!

Every month, GAMES brings you unique word and number puzzles that will really intrigue and entertain you...fascinating cryptograms...challenging map puzzles, logic problems, visual puzzles and trivia quizzes, all too irresistible to pass up!

But that's not all! You can enter imaginative contests, and pit your knowledge, strategy or skill against other readers, to win valuable prizes. And if you love crosswords, you'll find plenty of unusual ones to keep you satisfied.

Plus, you'll find reviews of new games, and news of special tournaments. You'll also learn to play exciting games from other lands.

So if you like your fun "spiked" with a bit of a challenge, it's time you discovered GAMES Magazine. Don't miss out, subscribe today!

(If subscription card is missing, send \$14.97 for one year (12 issues) to GAMES, P.O. Box 10147, Des Moines, Iowa 50340.)

NOTE: Enjoy solving the puzzles at left (the answers are on the back of the subscription card). They're just a hint of all the challenging fun waiting for you in every issue of GAMES!

JDV48

you." He rose and prowled the narrow kitchen. "Da stayed in Antwerp for seven weeks and during that time he became involved with a Palestinian girl who worked at the Fabiola. I am the result of that involvement."

"You lie! John never would—"

"When I was six years old my mother died of leukemia and Da brought me here."

"Now I know you're lying. John never went to Antwerp again."

"He didn't have to. My uncle brought me to Dublin."

"Why are you telling me all this? Are you trying to destroy my memory of him?"

"You need never have known any of this if—"

"If what? If I'm after selling the house? That's it, of course. You want my house. Well, you're not going to get it. I was born in this house, and I'm going to die in this house."

"You're right about that," he murmured.

"Well, now that we have that settled, why don't you go back to your pub friends and leave me alone?"

"Don't think I don't wish I could but I promised Da I'd take care of you."

"You? Take care of me? That's a laugh! You've never spent two minutes in the same room with me if you could help it!"

"When I was small I tried, but you couldn't stand the look of me." Liam sat back down and rubbed a hand over his face. "This is getting us nowhere. Please listen. When I was fourteen Da got a phone call from my Uncle Omar. He said the people he worked for needed a way to get merchandise past Irish customs. With that in view, a Sunday sailor—a midsea rendezvous—would solve their problem. As questions could arise if Da bought a boat, it was arranged that the *Kathleen Bawn* would come to him as a bequest from a non-existent relative residing in Holland at the time of his death—"

A thud sounded in the hall, quickly followed by the clank of metal on metal.

"I wonder what that can be. There's no post at this hour," Mary said. Liam went to investigate.

A moment later he returned holding a folded newspaper with an envelope scotch-taped to one side. He pulled the letter free and laid the paper flat on the table.

DUBLIN SOLICITOR'S SECRETARY MURDERED was splashed across the top third of the front page. Below, a pretty girl smiled above the caption: *Nuala Connolly, secretary to Carlton Browne of J. Robinson*

and Co., Solicitors, was found dead early this morning by a cleaning woman. The article went on to say the girl had suffered a severe blow to the head as well as bruises on the arms and legs. Mr. Browne had been contacted at his holiday home on Teneriffe and was returning to take inventory of the open safe.

Mary pushed the paper to one side. Liam looked at her, wondering how she could be so cold. He sighed and handed her the envelope. "Here. Read it. Da wrote it—maybe you'll believe *him*."

He watched the conflicting emotions flicker across her face as she recognized the small neat handwriting that covered several pages in close lines.

"It's John's handwriting." She glanced up. "It would *seem* to be John's handwriting," she amended, as a thought struck her. "Your name—McCann. It's on the birth certificate." Her voice was triumphant. At last she had one fact to prove the rest of what he said lies.

"Da looked through records at a number of parish houses until he found a child who was born the same day I was. As the boy was dead, my using his birth certificate as identification presented no problems. It was easy enough to write to the Customs House enclosing a postal order requesting a copy of the required paper. Go on—read the letter."

She obeyed, turning the pages slowly and eventually looking up at him.

"It would seem that what you say is true," she grudging. "You are his son." Suddenly her eyes brimmed and Liam wondered if it was in sorrow that he was Slattery's son or if it was because of all the lost years.

Sniffing, Mary felt in the pockets of her cardigan. "I need a tissue," she said, "I must be catching cold."

Without moving out of his chair, Liam plucked one from a drawer in the wall cabinet. She accepted it without a word of thanks and patting at her nose she resumed reading the letter.

"What else was there to do? I agreed to Omar's plan or I broke Mary's heart. So after the boat arrived at Dun Laoghaire, Liam and I became weekend sailors. Years passed without a word from Omar and I thought he had forgotten all about us. Then he telephoned from Germany. He said his superiors were transferring their activities to Ireland. From then on we rendezvoused regularly with one ship or another who put a man on board to exchange the *Kathleen Bawn*'s two life preservers for another pair."

As she read, Mary's heart squeezed tight. Without wanting to know more but unable to stop herself, she read how Slattery had been cautioned against touching the life preservers. Of course, he thought them filled with cash in exchange for narcotics. But he didn't touch them until one day the *Kathleen Bawn* ran into a squall and the starboard preserver came loose. In resecuring it, Slattery found it weighed a ton. Examination showed it was filled with bagged gold coins and jewelry. Putting two and two together, it was obvious to him that he was being used by terrorists. The check for two hundred pounds that came through the letter slot each month paid for the *Kathleen Bawn's* aid in financing the purchase of arms to further their cause.

From then on, the letter said, Slattery always checked the contents of the life preservers. When they carried cash, which they often did from one of the bank raids that were epidemic of late, he removed a thousand or so. In the letter he told how Liam had been used as driver of the getaway car, sometimes using the Honda to escape with the boodle. He told how the Collector's Markets had become fair game, most of the merchandise being unidentifiable except for an exceptionally rare specimen of stamp or coin.

Halfway down on the last page there was a quote from the *Philatelic Exporter* citing the upsurge of theft in the coin-and-stamp world, naming a German stamp dealer who had been killed during one such robbery.

"Here at the end John says he's leaving this letter with his solicitor to be posted in case anything happened to him. So why—?" Mary looked up from the letter.

"The solicitor, Carlton Browne—" Liam indicated the newspaper on the table "—was in Teneriffe on holiday. He always goes away for six weeks at Eastertime. That's why the letter wasn't sent to the police."

"But why was it put through our letter slot?"

"So we'd know that Da's insurance policy has lapsed and we're next on the list. You wondered why I stayed away after the other afternoon? I had to find out why the letter hadn't reached the Garda Síochána. Da never told me the solicitor's name in case one of Uncle Omar's friends tried to force it out of me." Liam's mouth stretched in a mirthless grin. "But in spite of all the precautions he was killed."

"If they had known about the letter they wouldn't have killed him," Mary protested. "It doesn't make sense!"

"I guess Paddy didn't know about the letter. When they found out that Da was making off with some of their cash, he went off half cocked and ran him down. He's a pretty hot-headed lad, Paddy is."

"You know this Paddy?"

"I do—and so do you. He's the nice boy who pushed you under the table during the robbery at the Collector's Fair."

"I don't believe you."

"Ah, Mary, you never know a book by its cover—or a man's heart by his voice. Paddy's a nice boy in his way—my best friend, I suppose—but that doesn't mean he's not going to kill us. He's the muscle man for Uncle Omar's group. There are four here in Ireland, two Palestinians and two Irish lads who are converted to their cause."

"Paddy must have followed me on the rounds of solicitor's offices. I had to know why the letter hadn't reached the police. When I finally discovered Carlton Browne was Da's solicitor I stopped looking." Liam's eyes were sad as he touched the newspaper. "A bad mistake. She was a fine honest girl, Nuala Connolly. She admitted Slattery was one of Browne's clients but insisted she knew nothing about any letter. As you see Paddy had no trouble getting it. I only hope he didn't hurt her too much before she died."

"*That's* why you said I should sell the house?" she whispered.

"And so at last the penny drops. A little late though." It was Liam's turn to be hard and bitter. "If you had agreed, I would have faked a phone call to a solicitor putting the house up for sale, then we could have hightailed it out of the country. In a month or so I would have had the money, thirty thousand pounds, transferred to your name in a bank in whatever city we found ourselves. Da deposited over sixty thousand pounds in our names—bit by bit he posted the money to Switzerland." He folded the newspaper closed in despair.

"Can't we leave now?"

"We can try," Liam said, but his tone didn't hold out much hope.

"I'll just throw some things in a bag—" Mary started up from the table.

Liam rose and took her firmly by the elbow. "Come with me," he said. He led the way along the narrow hall to the front door.

"Look through the spy hole," he told her. "You see the red Toyota across the street?"

Mary saw it.

"The man sitting at the wheel is your nice young man Paddy."

"How do I know that? I never saw his face. That could be anyone sitting out there."

"You'll just have to take my word for it. Now let's get the hell out the back way. We might have a chance."

Mary didn't move. Her jaw was set and her mouth tight in the stubborn line Liam knew so well.

"It's a trick of yours to get the house," Mary said, sliding back the bolt. "Why should I believe you? I'm going out and talk to him. If it's him I'll recognize his voice." She took off the chain.

"No, Mary!" Liam cried.

Mary turned the knob and stepped outside—and all her doubts were erased as the world shattered in a blast of light and sound. And in that split second she knew beyond all doubt that Liam was right—about Paddy, about John, about herself, and everything.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

SHE SHOULD HAVE STUCK WITH LAMBS

by SHARLIE FIELDS

Mary had a little scam—
She always fleeced the meek.
She used the classic pigeon drop
On victims old and weak.

She conned a mobster's mother,
Which was a big mistake,
For when her neighbors found her—
Well, tomorrow is her wake.

© 1982 by Sharlie Fields.

a **NEW Dr. Sam Hawthorne story by**

EDWARD D. HOCH

The team of barnstormers consisted of three stuntmen-pilots and a stunt woman. Their equipment consisted of two little biplanes and a Ford Trimotor transport they called the Tin Goose because of its all-metal body.

It was the summer of 1930, Dr. Sam remembered, and Winslow's Flying Circus had come to Northmont—resulting in a murder in what could be called a flying locked room. Another "impossible crime" from the flying pen of Edward D. Hoch . . .

THE PROBLEM OF THE TIN GOOSE

by **EDWARD D. HOCH**

66 **W**hat was I goin' to tell you about this time?" old Dr. Sam Hawthorne asked as he poured two brimming glasses of sherry and then seated himself in the worn leather armchair. "Oh, I know—it was the flying circus that visited Northmont in the summer of 1930. That was a wild time, I'll tell you, with murder committed in what could be called a flying locked room. It all began, I suppose, with a romance that blossomed quickly between a barnstorming pilot and a local girl. . ."

It was a hot, cloudless July afternoon (Dr. Sam continued) when I strolled over to the offices of the *Northmont Bee* to place a classified ad in their weekend edition. I was trying to sell my tan Packard runabout that I'd owned for a little over two years. It was a fine car but it had never replaced my beloved Pierce-Arrow that was destroyed by fire in a botched attempt to kill me back in February of

© 1982 by Edward D. Hoch.

'28. Now I'd been lucky enough to purchase a beautiful 1929 Stutz Torpedo, almost like new, from a doctor in Shinn Corners who'd lost a bundle in the stock-market crash. The Packard would have to go, so I decided to run an ad offering it for sale.

"That's sixty cents," Bonnie Pratt told me as she finished counting the words. "This sounds like a good deal. I should come out and take a look at it myself."

"Why don't you?" I urged her. "It's over at my office now."

"Oh, I've seen you driving it," Bonnie said. She was a pert young redhead who'd been working at the *Bee* since she'd dropped out of college when her father died about a year before. The Pratts were good people, and though I didn't know Bonnie well she was the sort of pretty girl who got noticed in a town as small as Northmont. "But maybe I will come over later," she added.

Because I enjoyed chatting with her I lingered a while after I'd paid my sixty cents. "What's the latest news, Bonnie? Give me a scoop."

She returned my grin and said, "You have to buy the paper, Dr. Sam. You don't give out free diagnoses, do you?"

"No," I admitted, "but can't I have a peek at the headline?"

"Oh, all right." She relented and held up the afternoon edition. "It's all about the flying circus that's coming to town on the week-end."

"We don't have an airport," I protested. "Where are they going to land?"

"At Art Zealand's Flying School. Look at these pictures. There's a Ford Trimotor, the one they call the Tin Goose because of its all-metal body. They'll actually be taking passengers up in that one, for a twenty-minute ride across the county and back. And this is their stunt biplane. They'll take you up in that too if you're brave enough—five dollars for five minutes. They've got the Ford Trimotor and two of these biplanes in the circus. It's quite a show."

"Those barnstormers have been popular for years," I said. "I wonder why they never came here before."

"Because Art Zealand didn't have his flying school till now," she answered reasonably. "They had no landing field. But aviation's the coming thing. People are flying across the country. I have an aunt who traveled from Los Angeles to New York last year in forty-eight hours! They flew by day and transferred to trains at night because it's too dangerous to fly after dark. She was on the maiden flight and Charles Lindbergh himself piloted the plane."

"You're really excited about this, aren't you?"

"I sure am," she conceded. "They're going to let me interview Ross Winslow for the *Bee*. He's the head of it. Look how handsome he is."

The head of Winslow's Flying Circus was an attractive fellow with curly black hair and a pencil-thin mustache. Looking at his picture on the front page of the paper I was struck by the notion that men like Ross Winslow were the forerunners of a whole new world. They were the ones that girls like Bonnie Pratt hankered after, not dull country doctors like myself.

"I'd like to meet him," I said. "The only experience I've had with fliers was back in 'twenty-seven when they shot part of a moving picture here."

She nodded, remembering. "I'd just gone off to college. Look, if you're interested you can come with me Friday to meet him. They're flying in around noon."

The idea intrigued me. "Let's see how things go. If Mrs. Haskell doesn't have her baby I should be able to get away for a few hours."

So that was how I happened to accompany Bonnie Pratt out to the Zealand Flying School on Friday noon to watch the big Ford Trimotor and the two smaller planes settle down for perfect landings on the grassy field. Art Zealand was there to greet them himself, of course, looking like his idea of a World War flying ace with a white silk scarf wrapped around his neck. Art was in his mid-thirties, about my age, and like me he was unmarried. He'd moved to Northmont a year or so earlier to start his flying school and there were unconfirmed rumors of an abandoned wife and children somewhere down south. He was pleasant enough when the need arose but kept to himself much of the time.

"Good to see you again, Sam," he greeted me as we drove up in my new Stutz Torpedo. "The doctoring business must be pretty good these days," he added, patting the car's shiny black fender. The body itself was tan, the contrasting red upholstery on its twin seats matching the red wheels. It was a flashy car for a country doctor, but it was my one extravagance.

"I figure I need something good for these bumpy country roads," I replied.

"I'll bet you could buy an airplane cheaper than that car."

We went off across the field to welcome the barnstormers. Ross Winslow was easy to spot climbing down from the lead plane, waving and walking forward to shake hands. Bonnie Pratt was highly excited as she introduced herself and me. "Hope we don't need your

services, Doc," Winslow joked, shaking my hand with an iron grip. "But then I don't guess we will. If I fall off a wing up there, you won't be able to do much for me."

Art Zealand had met Winslow before and he pointed out the area where the three planes should be parked. There was some discussion about the crowds that might be expected and a low-keyed conversation about Winslow's share of the gate. Apparently Zealand guaranteed him a flat sum of a few hundred dollars plus anything he earned from the plane rides.

I turned my attention to the other members of Winslow's Flying Circus, who seemed to be three in number. Two were men a bit older than I—a blond fellow with a scar on his cheek, whose name was Max Renker, and a short jolly fellow named Tommy Verdun. But my real interest centered on the fourth member of the team, a long-haired blonde named Mavis Wing who gave me a slow smile like nothing I'd ever seen in Northmont.

"I can't imagine women barnstorming and walking on wings," I said when I'd found my tongue.

"Oh, we do it, Dr. Hawthorne." The slow smile was back. "Lillian Boyer has her own plane with her name in big letters on the side. That's what I'm aiming for. My name's really Wingarten, but that wouldn't look good on the side of a plane, would it?"

"You could just use your picture. That would be enough," I replied gallantly.

"Oh, come now, Dr. Hawthorne—you're something of a flirt, aren't you?"

Before I could pursue the subject, Winslow gave them instructions for parking the planes and Bonnie and I went off with him for the interview. Art Zealand had provided a table and chairs in the hangar, where Bonnie took rapid notes as Winslow spoke.

"Max and Tommy both flew in the war," he explained, "So they're a leg up on me. I took pilot training but it was all over before I ever got to France. The three of us got together nearly ten years ago and decided to try barnstorming. You've probably read about Sir Alan Cobham, the famous European barnstormer. His circus has performed all over the Continent and we hope to do the same thing on this side of the Atlantic. There's a lot of competition, of course, and we try to outdo each other dreaming up wild stunts."

"What about your planes?" Bonnie asked without looking up from her notes.

"In this country we all use Jennies, those little biplanes with the

double set of wings. They're JN-4D trainers the Army built near the end of the war. By the time they were finished the war was over and the government started selling thousands of 'em for as little as three hundred dollars each. A lot of us who flew in the war, or who trained to fly like me, went out and bought ourselves a plane. Max and Tommy and I started with three Jennies but last year we traded one in for that Ford Trimotor transport. We found out that after watching our stunts the crowd was really ready to fly. We'd have thirty or forty people lined up for a five-minute ride in a Jennie, so we decided that if we could take up ten at a time, for a slightly longer flight they'd still pay five dollars and we'd make a lot more money."

"Tell me about your stunts," Bonnie urged. "That's what'll get the people out."

"Well, we start out by buzzing the town with the two Jennies while Max and I walk out on the wings. Then Mavis does her wild act, actually hanging by one arm from a wing while I fly the plane. That's been known to make people faint. Tommy Verdun is our clown and he's liable to do anything. Sometimes he dresses up like a woman and waits in line for a ride in one of the Jennies. The pilot gets out and Tommy gets in and pretends the plane is taking off with him at the controls, out of control. It's guaranteed to get screams out of the spectators. Then I wind things up by transferring from one plane to the other, either using a rope ladder or walking across, wingtip to wingtip."

"Do you make good money at this?"

Ross Winslow snorted. "Hell, no. We do it because we love it. Somebody said the most dangerous thing about barnstorming is the risk of starving to death, and he's right. We were going to give it up this year, but they say the country's heading into a depression and where would we find jobs? We figure if we can keep at this for another year or two, till the airlines really get established, they'll take us on as commercial pilots. Then maybe we'll start making real money."

"What about Mavis Wing?"

"She's great. Wait till you see her up there. Mavis joined us last summer and business shot up right away. There's nothing like seeing a girl hanging from that plane to get the crowds cheering and biting their nails. I make her keep her hair long so they know she's a woman from a distance, and she wears knickers so they see a little bit of leg."

"It sounds like a great show," Bonnie said. "I'll be here bright and early tomorrow."

As we were preparing to leave Winslow asked her, "What's there to do in this town at night? Got any good bars?"

"With Prohibition?" she asked in mock horror.

"Come on—I'll bet you know the places to go."

"There's a lunch counter where you can get a shot of whiskey in a coffee cup. Will that do?"

"For starters. Will you go with me?"

She hesitated only a second. "Well—sure, I guess so."

"Fine. Can I pick you up at your office?"

"In your plane?"

He chuckled. "Art said I could use his car while we're in town."

So it was decided. I drove her back to the *Bee* office in my Stutz, amazed that Ross Winslow had gotten a date with her so easily and wondering why I'd never thought to ask her for one myself.

The *Northmont Bee* was published on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, with the Friday edition being designated for the weekend. Of course, back in those days most people worked at least a half day on Saturdays, but the Friday edition still had the most readers of the week, which is why I'd run the ad for my car in it. Friday evening brought several interested callers, and one of them—the son of the town banker—came by on Saturday morning to close the deal.

With the car sold I felt I could relax for the weekend. Mrs. Haskell's baby still hadn't made it into the world and showed no signs of doing so before Monday, so I decided to close the office early and take my nurse April out to the flying circus.

"You mean to say I'll get to ride in your new car?" she asked. I think that was a bigger treat for her than the prospect of seeing the barnstormers.

"It's the only car I've got now," I told her. "I sold the old one this morning."

"If I'd had the money I'd have bought it myself. You take good care of your cars, Dr. Sam."

She was thrilled by the ride in the Stutz, holding down her hair as the wind whipped through it on the way to the flying school. When we arrived a little before noon, I saw that the adjoining field was already crowded with parked wagons and automobiles. Their

noise made the horses nervous, but as the planes flew back and forth in their opening salute the crowd roared its approval.

"Everyone in town must be here," April said.

Sheriff Lens and his new wife Vera were there, and I was pleased to see them. Married life had made the sheriff almost a stranger, though I was glad to see he was still his old self. "Doc, Vera was just sayin' the other day we gotta have you over for dinner some night. We been back from the honeymoon six months and the only time we seen you was at that church social in the spring."

Vera took up the urging. "How about next week, Sam? What evening is best for you?"

I knew Vera was still working at the post office and I was reluctant to force dinner preparation on her at the end of a working day. "Maybe Sunday would be good. A week from tomorrow?"

"Perfect," she agreed. "Do I get a ride in your new car?"

"Of course."

April tugged at my sleeve. "Look, Sam!"

The two Jennies had landed but now one had taken off again, and I saw a figure with long blonde hair, a white blouse, and knickers edging out on the wing. It was Mavis, beginning her act. I left April with the sheriff and Vera and walked around the fringes of the crowd for a better view. I'd reached the hangar area, nodding now and then to familiar faces in the crowd, when I encountered Bonnie Pratt standing beside Ross Winslow. He was wearing a short leather flying jacket and had his arm lightly around her waist. "Hello, Bonnie," I said.

"Hello, Sam." She edged free of his arm.

"That was a nice opening," I told Winslow. "I thought you'd be up there flying for Mavis."

"Max is flying her today. After Mavis does her stunts I'll take some passengers up in the Tin Goose."

Zealand came into the hangar, looking troubled. "Can I see you alone, Ross?"

They walked back to the office together and I said to Bonnie, "So you showed him the town last night. Did he enjoy it?"

"I think I'm in love with him, Sam. He's so handsome and dashing. I feel like he's a war hero. The local boys just don't compare to him."

"He's only here for the weekend, Bonnie. Don't get your hopes too high."

"He talks about settling down, maybe here in Northmont. He says he may have had enough of flying."

I wondered how many girls in how many towns had heard that same line over a weekend. But I said simply, "I hope it works out for you, Bonnie."

Zealand and Winslow returned, and I heard the school owner mutter, "I didn't know what I was getting into when I booked your crew." Winslow didn't reply but flashed his familiar smile when he saw Bonnie.

"Will you be going up again?" she asked him.

He nodded, glancing at the sky. Mavis was hanging from the plane by one arm as the crowd screamed its delight and apprehension. "She'll be finishing soon. Come on, I'll show you the inside of the Trimotor." The invitation seemed to include me so I tagged along with Bonnie.

It was a big plane by any standards I knew then. The body was covered with corrugated metal and the high wings supported two of the three engines, the third being at the front of the plane. Inside were two rows of wicker-backed chairs separated by an aisle. I sat down in one of the chairs. It felt about like a lawn chair. "Not too comfortable," I commented to Winslow.

"The wicker saves weight, but the airlines are deciding the same thing. Comfort is important. We were able to get this plane fairly cheap because they're phasing it out in favor of a new Douglas aircraft. These things are noisy, and if you fly too high they're cold."

"When will the new planes be flying?"

"Not for a few years, unfortunately, but when they are they'll probably put Ford out of the flying business completely. Ford owns the Detroit airport, you know, but Henry Ford won't allow it to be open on Sundays." He patted the side of the metal craft affectionately. "Still, this is what we've got today and it gets you where you're going most of the time. Would you like to go up for a spin?"

I wanted to, very much, but I felt guilty going without April. "I should take my nurse along," I explained. "We'll go later."

"How about you two?" he asked Bonnie and Zealand.

"Sure," Art Zealand answered. "Let's go up. I want to see what the customers get for their five dollars."

I left the plane as Winslow went up a few steps into the cockpit and closed the door behind him. He called out the window to a ground crewman to move the blocks from under the wheels and then started all three engines. I watched him slide the window closed and taxi out to the grassy runway. Then he gunned the motors and the plane shot ahead, lifting its wheels from the ground with ease.

I glanced up and saw the Jennie still circling the crowd. Mavis had lifted herself onto the wing again, and was climbing back into the front cockpit. The second Jennie was still on the ground and I wondered what had become of the other team member, Tommy Verdun.

I strolled back to where April still stood with Sheriff Lens and Vera. "Were you on that plane?" April asked. "I thought I saw you."

"I just took a look. Winslow is taking Art Zealand up, and Bonnie Pratt from the *Bee*. When he lands they'll start taking paying passengers."

"I'd like to go up," April said.

"I figured you would."

The spectators were pointing toward the sky again and I saw that the Jennie piloted by Max Renker had moved into position quite close to the larger Ford Trimotor. They were flying almost wingtip to wingtip, and Mavis waved to the crowd as she started walking out on the Jennie's upper wing again.

"What in hell is that gal goin' to do next?" Sheriff Lens wondered.

"I think she'll try to walk over to the other plane's wing," I said, remembering what Winslow had told us of their stunts.

And that she did, stepping over as easily as she might cross the street. The crowd cheered as the planes flew overhead, so low I could see Bonnie's face at one of the Trimotor's windows, straining for a view of the wing above her head. "The passengers are missing the performance," Vera remarked.

Then Mavis hurried back, hopping onto the wing of the Jennie, and the two aircraft drifted slowly apart. I watched her climb into the open cockpit of the Jennie as it circled one more time and came in for a landing at the far end of the field. The Trimotor landed right behind it, taxiing to a stop near us.

We waited for the door of the passenger compartment to open, but nothing happened. I couldn't see Winslow through the cockpit windows, although there was movement inside the passenger compartment. Finally, after another few moments, the passenger door was shoved open and Bonnie's head appeared. "Dr. Sam!" she shouted.

I trotted across the trampled-down grass of the field, already sensing that something was wrong. "What is it, Bonnie?"

"Ross is still in the cockpit with the door locked. We've been calling him and he doesn't answer. I think something's wrong!"

I climbed through the door and hurried up the aisle between the

wicker seats. Art Zealand was pounding on the cockpit door, shouting, "Winslow! What's wrong? Open up!"

"Should we put a ladder up to the cockpit window?" Bonnie asked.

I tried the door myself. "If it's something like a heart attack every second counts. This feels like a flimsy lock." I glanced at Zealand for permission. "Should I force it?"

"Go ahead."

I hit the cockpit door with my shoulder and the door started to give. Once more and it sprang open.

Ross Winslow was visible at once, toppled from the pilot's seat onto the unused copilot's seat next to it. I saw the blood and heard Bonnie's high-pitched voice from the aisle. "What?—What is it?"

I took a deep breath and told Zealand, "Get her out of here, off the plane. Right now." Then I stepped forward and bent over the pilot's seat examining the body. There was no doubt that he was dead.

"What is it, Doctor?"

I turned as Mavis Wing stepped into the cockpit, still wearing her stunt clothes. "Ross Winslow is dead," I said.

"What?"

"He's been stabbed to death. Go get Sheriff Lens for me, will you? He's a stocky man over at the edge of the crowd."

Sheriff Lens merely shook his head and stared at me. "What you're sayin' is downright impossible, Doc. Winslow was stabbed to death while he was alone inside this locked cockpit and you're trying to tell me it wasn't suicide?"

"It wasn't suicide," I repeated. "Look at where the knife went in—between the ribs on his left side, toward the back. No suicide would stab himself there. It's an almost impossible angle, certainly un unnecessary angle. Besides, when would he have done it? He landed the plane, remember, and taxied up to the crowd. Are we to believe he suddenly decided to kill himself then, by stabbing himself in the back at a nearly impossible angle?"

The sheriff stroked his chin, thinking about it. "Well, that leaves only one other explanation. Zealand and Bonnie Pratt got him to open the door and they killed him together."

"Zealand and Bonnie barely know each other. Why would they conspire to kill Winslow? Besides, you're forgetting the cabin door was locked from Winslow's side. I had to break it in with my shoulder."

"Yeah," he answered glumly.

"We'd better talk to them," I decided. "Whatever happened in that cockpit, they must have heard something."

They were both waiting in the hangar. I spoke with Bonnie while Sheriff Lens questioned Zealand separately. "I didn't hear a thing from the cockpit," she assured me. "You can barely hear yourself *think* in that plane, Sam! It's the noisiest contraption imaginable! Art Zealand told me that on commercial runs they give the passengers cotton to plug their ears."

"The landing seemed smooth from where we stood."

"It was smooth. There was nothing at all unusual until the plane came to a stop and Ross just didn't come out the door." Her composure cracked on the last word and she started to sob.

"Bonnie," I said softly, "I have to ask you this. How serious was it between you and Winslow? You only met him yesterday."

She turned her tear-streaked face to me. "I'd never known anyone like him, Sam. I never believed in love at first sight, but I guess that's what happened to me."

"Did it happen to him too?"

"He said it did. We—we spent the night together."

"I see."

"He told me he wanted to settle down in a town like this, give up barnstorming and raise a family."

"Maybe he told that to lots of girls, Bonnie."

"I don't think so, Sam. I believed him." She wiped her eyes.

"But if you came out here this morning to watch the circus and then discovered he'd lied to you, it might have made you want to kill him."

"Do you think that?"

"I don't know what to think, Bonnie."

She collected herself and dried her eyes. "Well, suspect or not, I still work for a newspaper. I guess I'd better go write this up for Monday's edition."

I left her in the hangar and went in search of the sheriff. When I found him he told me Zealand's story agreed with Bonnie's. The noise of the plane had kept them from hearing anything unusual from the cockpit. "What now?" Sheriff Lens asked, gazing uncomfortably at the cluster of townspeople still waiting at the edge of the field. They'd been told there was an accident and the show had been cancelled, but most of them refused to budge even after the ambulance from Pilgrim Memorial Hospital came and removed the body.

I thought the best thing I could do then was stop Mavis Wing before she took off with her two companions. I told Sheriff Lens what I had in mind and he trailed along. Mavis and the others were in Zealand's office, staying clear of the crowd. I took her aside and asked, "What was your relationship with Ross Winslow?"

She stared hard at me. "I don't know that I need to answer that. You're not the police, are you?"

"No, but I am," Sheriff Lens told her. "Answer the question."

"Maybe I should clarify it," I continued. "Winslow spent the night with a local girl. Might that have made you jealous enough to kill him?"

"Certainly not. And you're forgetting I was up in the sky at the time."

"On the wing of his plane," I reminded her. "He could have slid open the cockpit window to call to you and been killed by a knife you threw, then managed to slide the window closed before he died." I saw the sheriff make a face as I spoke. Even he could see the impossibility of that theory.

"You can't see into the cockpit from the top of the wing," Mavis told us. "Try it if you don't believe me. Besides, I was on the wing for only a few seconds, and visible from the ground. No one saw me throw anything. Throw anything! I was too worried about keeping my balance."

"We'll try it," I assured her, but I knew I was on the wrong track. I turned to Sheriff Lens. "Have you identified the knife?"

He nodded. "Zealand says it was a utility knife from the hangar. Anyone could have picked it up."

"Did you see anyone with a knife?" I asked Mavis Wing.

"No."

"Did you see anything unusual while you were on the wing of the plane?"

"No."

"All right," I said with a sigh. "The sheriff may want to question you again later."

"What about the other two?" Lens asked as we left the office. "Renker and Verdun?"

"Renker was flying Mavis's plane up there, right next to the Tri-motor. Verdun was somewhere on the ground. Maybe Renker threw the knife from his cockpit."

"Oh, come on now, Doc—you know that couldn't 'a happened. First of all, that knife's not balanced for throwin', especially not up in the

sky with the wind blowin'. And the wound was in the side, around toward the back, and slantin' upward. No knife thrown through the plane's window could have hit him there."

"Of course not," I agreed readily. "I realized that as soon as I said it to Mavis. And that lets Renker off for the same reason. But let's talk to him anyway."

Max Renker was in his mid-thirties, and his blond hair and the scar on his right cheek reminded me of German war aces with university dueling scars. He answered our questions directly, but added little to our knowledge.

"Did you actually see Winslow in the cockpit of the Trimotor?" I asked.

"Sure, I saw him. I waved to him, even. He was alive and well then—but of course he'd have to be, to fly the plane."

"I want to go up on the wing, like Mavis did," I said suddenly.

His eyes widened. "You mean up in the sky?"

"No! On the ground. Can you get me a ladder and help me up there?"

"Sure."

Renker went first and then helped me up onto the wing, some ten feet off the ground. Although the front of the cockpit could certainly be seen, Mavis was right—the angle of the glass prevented a view of the pilot's seat. "That's what I wanted to know," I said. "Let's go back down."

"Wing-walking on the Trimotor is more dangerous than on the Jennies," Renker explained as he helped me down the ladder. "The smaller planes have cables on top we can cling to or brace our legs against. You can't see them from below but they're a big help."

I reached the ground and walked around to the front of the plane. "What's this?" I asked, pointing to a small metal door beneath the cockpit windows on the right side.

"Compartment for luggage and mail sacks. We use it for tools."

"Is there any opening from here to the cockpit?"

"No. Take a look and see for yourself."

I went back inside the plane, walking up the slanting aisle between the rows of wicker seats, then up the few steps to the cockpit door I'd battered open. I checked the windows and noticed each had a little inside latch that was firmly in place. "We modified the cockpit area to our own needs," Renker explained over my shoulder. "The door is placed a bit differently than in commercial planes, and we

added those latches so kids wouldn't be climbing through the cockpit windows when the plane's parked overnight at some hick airfield."

"So the door and the windows were latched on the inside," I mused. "And no knife could have been thrown from outside even if a window was open." I turned to Renker in the cramped cockpit. "What about it? You must have some idea how he was killed."

He leaned against the wall next to the door. "Sure. Art Zealand and the girl stabbed him. Ross staggered back into the cockpit, latched the door to keep them out, and died. I hear people can do things like that, even with a fatal knife wound. Isn't that so, Doc?"

"Yes," I agreed. "But it's hard to believe they're both lying. Besides, I don't see any blood by the door, only right by the seat here, as if he was stabbed sitting down."

"Then what are you left with? Suicide?"

"I don't know," I admitted. "Suicide isn't very likely either."

"Well, I sure had no reason to kill him. Ross was the star of the show, he and Mavis. Tommy and I are nothing without them."

"I'd better talk to Tommy," I decided. "He was on the ground—maybe he saw something the rest of us missed."

Tommy Verdun was a small man with short dark hair. He sat in the office wearing a long white duster pulled around him as if to ward off a chill. "I don't know anything about it," he grumbled. "I sure didn't kill him."

"Where were you at the time it happened?" Sheriff Lens asked.

"I don't know when it happened," he answered evasively. "You think he was killed in the air or on the ground?"

"He had to be alive to land the plane," I pointed out.

"Yeah. Well, I was over in back of the hangar, making sure the kids stayed away from my plane."

"Anybody see you?"

"I suppose not," he admitted. "But then nobody seen me kill Ross either."

"Did you kill him?" I asked.

"I told you I didn't. You don't listen good."

"Aren't you supposed to be the clown of this outfit? You're not very friendly for a clown."

"Got nothing to be friendly about, with the boss dead."

I went back outside with Sheriff Lens. "I don't like that fellow," I told him.

"Neither do I, Doc, but that don't prove he killed anyone. We still

don't know how it was done." He thought for a moment. "But I got an idea. Maybe there was some sort of mechanical gadget that stabbed him when he sat down in the pilot's seat."

"You're forgetting he took off, flew a dangerous stunt almost touching that Jennie's wingtip, and then landed again. He couldn't have done any of that with a knife in him."

"I guess not," the sheriff agreed glumly. "But what about this guy Verdun? If he was a clown wouldn't he be foolin' with the kids instead of tryin' to chase them away from his plane?"

"A good point," I admitted. "But if he's lying about where he was at the time of the murder—" I stopped, suddenly remembering an earlier conversation. "Let's find Zealand."

The owner of the flying school was in the hangar with Bonnie, seated opposite her and holding her hands. They broke apart as we entered. "Hello, Sam. Bonnie and I were just having a chat."

"So I see. Art, before the killing you asked to see Winslow alone and I heard you say you didn't know what you were getting into when you booked his crew. What was that about?"

Zealand shifted uneasily. "This morning I got a phone call from a friend in Ohio. He told me Winslow and his crew got drunk and smashed up a town out there. Winslow and his wife spent the night in jail."

"His wife?"

"Sure. He and Mavis were married."

Bonnie Pratt flushed deeply and turned away. "Did you know this?" I asked her.

"Art was just telling me. I didn't know it before."

"So there's our motive," I said. "The oldest motive there is."

"Maybe we got a motive, Doc," Sheriff Lens said, "but we still don't have the killer. And you've ruled out every way Winslow could have been stabbed in that locked cockpit."

"Every way but one, Sheriff." I glanced out the hangar door and spotted Tommy Verdun walking quickly across the field toward his plane. "Come on!" I shouted.

I ran out, calling to Verdun, but he broke into a run, perhaps sensing my suspicions. "Try to head him off," I called to the sheriff.

His long white duster billowed out behind him as he ran, and it seemed to slow him down. Finally I was close enough to grab the coattail and I yanked him to the ground. Then the sheriff and I were on top of him.

"So he's our killer," Sheriff Lens said, reaching for his handcuffs.

"No, Sheriff, you don't understand," I said. "Didn't it seem strange to you that Mavis's plane landed at the far end of the field after her act, when the crowd was up here?" I pulled upen Tommy's duster to show the white blouse and knickers underneath. The long blond wig was stuffed in his pocket. "Mavis wasn't on that plane. Tommy walked on that wing in her place while Mavis was in the cockpit of the Tin Goose killing her husband."

I told it all once, after the sheriff had arrested Mavis and taken down her statement. I stood in the center of the empty hangar, feeling a bit like a lecturer, and said, "It was really quite simple—so simple I nearly missed it. After I battered in that cockpit door and sent Bonnie and Art for the sheriff, I bent to examine the body and Mavis suddenly appeared behind me in the doorway. Because I thought she'd been on the wing of that other plane, I never asked what she was doing there, or how she'd made it from the far end of the field so fast. I accepted her presence without even wondering how she'd gotten on the plane ahead of Sheriff Lens."

"How did she get on board?" Bonnie asked. "I didn't see her outside."

"Of course not, because she was on the plane all the time, hidden in the cockpit. Winslow didn't shout for help when he found her there because he never expected she'd kill him. She'd probably had Verdun take her place on other occasions. Winslow told us Verdun sometimes dressed up like a woman for his act, and at that distance the crowd could only see the long blonde hair and the outfit Mavis always wore."

"But why did she hide in the cockpit?"

"To confront her husband with the fact that he'd spent the night with Bonnie. Isn't that right, Mavis?"

She shifted on her chair. "He was always doing it," she answered dully. "I told him I'd kill him if he didn't stop."

"So you hid in the cockpit and confronted him. You probably argued during the flight, with the noise of the plane covering your voices. You stepped behind his seat and brought the knife up into his side. Then you took over the copilot's controls and landed the plane yourself. When I broke the latch and pushed in the door, you simply stood flat against the wall behind it where I couldn't see you. When I bent over you stepped into the doorway as if you'd just come on board."

"I'll be damned," Sheriff Lens muttered.

"It wouldn't have worked if Zealand or Bonnie had remained on board, but you were improvising. It was your only chance."

"But Renker and Verdun musta known she did it," the sheriff said.

"They strongly suspected it, of course. But they'd already lost one star act and if they turned her in they'd have no jobs."

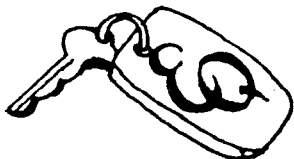
Verdun shook his head. "I didn't know what she was plannin' when I took her place. I'd done it before as a joke. I didn't know she'd kill him."

The crowd had all gone home by the time we finished, except for April and Vera. They were standing out by the Tin Goose, waiting for us to finish. I was sorry April hadn't gotten the plane ride I'd planned for her.

"—And that was the story," Dr. Sam Hawthorne concluded. "It was the last flying circus that ever came to Northmont. The era of the barnstormer was just about over. It ended about as quickly as it began. It ended that day for Ross Winslow, one of the great ones.

"In the fall of that same year my folks visited me in Northmont to see how their son the doctor was getting along. It was during hunting season, and their visit was almost spoiled by an impossible killing during a deer hunt.

"But that's for next time."



CLASSIFIED MARKET PLACE

ELLERY QUEEN—is published 13 times a year. The rate for **CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS** is \$1.35 per word, payable in advance—minimum ad \$27.00. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue, please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

AGENTS WANTED

FROM YOUR HOME sell books by mail. Substantial profits, no experience. Details \$1.00. RWH Enterprise, 2 Grand View Drive, Smithfield, RI 02917.

UNEMPLOYED? UNDER PAID? TIRED OF PRESENT EMPLOYMENT? Try this! **EXCITING INCOME.** My company seeking sales agents. Ideal Home business opportunity. No experience needed! Start immediately. An exciting future awaits you! \$1.00 full details. Five Lakes Enterprises, 6626 18th Avenue 3NA, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

LOOKING for a publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for free booklet, HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

AVIATION

ANTIGRAVITY PROPULSION DEVICE! Free Brochure. RDA, Box 873, Concord, NC 28025.

BIORHYTHMS

BIORHYTHMS and Critical Day Lists. Compatibility assessments free with 2+ charts. Send birthdates and \$3.50/year/chart to: Black Swan, Box 5200, Loveland, Colorado 80537.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

FREE CATALOGUES, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service. Detective Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida, 32808.

MYSTERY, Detective, Science-Fiction. **FIRST EDITIONS. PAULETTE GREENE RARE BOOKS.** 140 Princeton Road, Rockville Centre, NY 11570. Catalogue \$2.00.

WORLD's largest mystery specialist (30,000 volumes). No obligation search service. Send \$2 for next 4 catalogues. Aardvarks Book Detectives, P.O. Box 15070, Orlando, FL 32858.

FREE list! Used hardcover mystery and detective fiction. Over 7500 books listed yearly. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Ave., Meriden, CT 06450.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

PUBLISHERS' OVERSTOCKS, BARGAIN BOOKS. 2,000 titles, all subjects! Free catalog: Hamilton's, 98-27 Clapboard, Danbury, CT 06810.

MYSTERIES BY MAIL. Huge selection. Paperback, hardcover, related items. Send stamped envelope for catalog. Sherlock's Home, 5614 E. Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803.

QUALITY current and classic hardbacks for readers and collectors at favorable prices. List free for SASE. Choctaw, Box 471, Ridgeland, Miss 39157.

60,000 Science Fiction and Mystery paperbacks, Hardcover, Magazines. Free catalogs! Grant Thiessen, Box Z-86A, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

SELLING Comic Books, Pulps, Shadow, Doc Savage, Paperbacks, Hardcover Books, Playboys, Movie Material, Movie and Science Fiction Magazines, TV Guides, James Bond, McGoohan, Monroe, Diana Rigg, Gum Cards, Art, Etc. Catalogs \$.95. Rogofsky, Box 107, Glen Oaks, NY 11004.

ANY out of print book located. Mysteries a specialty. No obligation. W. Spinelli, 32 Elmwood, Pgh, PA 15205.

"CLIENT'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER." Tax, money saving, investment and personal development advice. The 16 page September issue is available for \$2.00. Al V. Barr, Public Accountant, Box 26517, Dept. C, Denver, Colorado 80226.

UNIQUE Book: How To Get Out Of Debt Fast. 10 day money back guarantee. Send \$6.95 to T. Kinser, P.O. Box 65915, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265.

QUALITY mystery/suspense fiction, puzzles, book reviews. Sample \$2.50. Subscriptions \$8.00. Black Cat Quarterly, Dept. E, 45-712 Southport, Toronto, Canada M6S 3N5.

PERFECT Christmas gift for mystery fans. **MISTLETOE MALICE** by Al Menendez, a guide to Christmas murder mysteries. Only \$4.95 plus .50 postage. Holly Tree Press, P.O. Box 7002, Silver Springs, MD 20907.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE DECEMBER 1982—153

Classified Continued

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors. Publicity, advertising, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. SMK, 84 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

BIG PROFIT HOME BUSINESS bronzing and chinakoting baby shoes. Cost \$1.00 pair; Sells \$19.95, up. NBSDG, 398 Airport, Sebring, FL 33870.

FREE BOOK — "2042 Unique, Proven Enterprises", Fabulous "Little Knowns". How tiny projects made big money! Work home! Haylings-OP, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail!! Free Supplies, Postage! Information? Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DC3, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

EARN Money Mailing School Bulletins. Free Postage! Supplies! For samples, enclose stamped addressed (long) envelope: Community Services, B9-CC, Orangeburg, NY 10962.

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

MAILORDER OPPORTUNITY! Start profitable home business without experience or capital. Information free. Gil Turk, Dept. 87, Montvale, NJ 07645.

RUBBER Stamp outfits as low as \$400.00. Payment plans available. Complete details write: Custom, 2914 W. Sexton, Springfield, MO 65807.

TAKE PICTURES for profit. Good spare-time income. Free report tells how. Write: Camera Ventures, 14589H West 32nd, Golden, CO 80401.

FAST BIG PROFITS. Sell How To Make Money Books By Mail. Get Ahead In Life. Write: Brim Enterprises, P.O. Box 958, Dept. 8-N, Springfield, Ohio 45501.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors. Masters, Ph.D.'s . . . without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-EQ-12, Tustin, CA 92680.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

WHY NOT GET THAT INTERVIEW! DON'T YOU DESERVE A GOOD JOB TOO? A seven chapter book containing a proven plan on how to open those all important interview doors. 30 day **MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.** Send \$10.00 to Glowing Light Publications, P.O. Box 1865, Dept. COM-01, Seaside, CA 93955.

FARMS, ACREAGE & REAL ESTATE

VACATION RETREATS. Info on Ontario public land \$5. Scope Enterprises, Box 607 Adelaide P.O., Toronto, Ontario M5C 2J8.

FILM & TV SCRIPTS

WRITERS AND COLLECTORS. Over 700 movie and television shooting scripts! Hitchcock to Spielberg. Send \$1.00 for Catalog. Scriptfinders, 1626 N. Wilcox, Hollywood, CA 90028. Suite #348.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

AMAZING! Christmas catalog! Over 2,500 items!! Send \$2.50 refundable on first order. Gifts Unlimited, MC12, 808 Sunset, El Paso, TX 79922.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

"GOVERNMENT SURPLUS" JEEPS \$30.00! 800,000 Items! Complete information Your area. Largest **OFFICIAL Directory.** \$3.00 (Guaranteed). **SURPLUS (A270),** 4620 Wisconsin Northwest, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20016.

ARMY Surplus. Many Items. Pants \$1.00; Shirts \$1.00; Shoes \$5.00; Boots \$8.00; Catalog \$4.00. Refund on First Order. Lawton Surplus, P.O. Box 764, Lawton, OK 73501.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

GREAT RADIO PROGRAMS — mystery, adventure, science-fiction. Free list cassettes. Rare Radio, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

SEASHELLS for your enjoyment, collecting and crafts. Send \$1.50 plus 50¢ postage and handling to California Coastal Products, Shells, P.O. Box 1680, Morro Bay, CA 93442.

BEATLES EARLY SIXTY'S 8x10 rare photos Collectors Items. For info send self-addressed envelope to: P.O. Box 115273 Atlanta, GA 30310.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Catalog. Hypnotism, Hypnotic cassettes, sleep learning. Become the person you truly want to be. **DLMH,** Box 487, Anaheim, CA 92805.

Classified Continued

HYPNOTISM—Cont'd

FREE ILLUSTRATED Hypnosis Sleep-Learning Catalog. Attain goals, conquer problems — AMAZING RESULTS! Advanced Systems-DV5, 13906 Ventura, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423.

JEWELRY

CLOSEOUT JEWELRY. 55¢ Dozen. 25¢ gets catalog. ROUSSELS, 107-310 Dow, Arlington, MA 02174.

LOANS BY MAIL

VISA/Mastercard by Mail! Obtain one through us, not just information, but a service. Write! Credit-DPC12, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870.

GET cash grants—from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, \$2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

BORROW \$25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report reveals little-known sources/techniques! Success Research, Box 19739-SZ Indianapolis, IN 46219.

\$LOANSS ON SIGNATURE TO \$100,000! Any purpose. Write: ELITE, Box 454-DG, Lynbrook, New York 11563.

BORROW \$25,000 OVERNIGHT. From Home. Free Report. Bond, Box 1674B, Merritt Island, FL 32952.

BORROW By Mail! Signature Loans, No Collateral! Many more unique services available. Write! Free Details! MBG-DPC1282, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870.

BORROW \$30,000 without interest! All eligible. Repay anytime. Free details. Infohouse, Box 1004-EQ12, New York, NY 10003.

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

MISCELLANEOUS

SAVE! Fabulous Natural Gems For Jewelry. Collecting! Gorgeous Amethysts, Tourmalines, Sapphires! Information Free. W. Taylor Gemcutter, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

MISCELLANEOUS—Cont'd

OLDTIME radio programs. Suspense, drama, science fiction, comedies. Highly enjoyable tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Route One, New Freedom, Pennsylvania 17349.

COLLEGE STUDENTS! — Improve your grades — Term paper catalog — 306 pages — 10,278 topics — Rush \$1.00 — Research, Box 25097P, Los Angeles, 90025. (213) 477-8226.

DEBT relief instantly, legally, without bankruptcy! Stop creditor harassment, wage garnishments, repossessions, foreclosures. Restore credit! Free details. Dynamoney, Box 33014 (D), Decatur, Georgia 30033.

"HOW To Survive Without A Salary." Cope in today's inflationary times by learning how to live the Conserver Lifestyle. 232 page book. \$10.95. More details 25¢. Eden Press, 11623 Slater, Box 8410-DS, Fountain Valley, CA 92708.

UNPEDIGREED PETS CERTIFIED. Documentation for loved ones of mixed heritage. Send \$5.00, pet's name (specify cat or dog) and mailing info to: Townehouse Enterprises, P.O. Box 1234, Paradise, CA 95969.

ZUCCHINI - 25 great recipes - bread, casseroles \$3.00. Maureen, Box 2271, Citrus Hills, CA 95611.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth \$2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send \$1.75 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

\$60.00 per Hundred securing — stuffing envelopes from home. Offer details: Rush stamped self-addressed envelope. Imperial, P-460, X17410, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

\$1000 WEEKLY POSSIBLE Mailing Envelopes! Easy Guaranteed Program! Free Details: Majestic, Box 415-DM, Lewiston, NY 14092.

SELL Books by Mail! Big Profits! Learn what the mailorder business is about. Write Now! MPG-DPC1282, Box 2133, Sandusky, OH 44870.

400% profit three-five years! Proven "safe" investment! Minimum capital-up! Details: Sase, John Plumb, 1634-C3, South 19th Street, Sheboygan, Wis. 53081.

EXTRA INCOME! \$500 + weekly at home in spare time: easy, guaranteed. Free details. Darbv & Sons, POB 6946-D, Chicago, 60680.

Classified Advertising

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

\$500 + WEEKLY at home in spare time: Easy, guaranteed. Start immediately! Free details. Darby & Sons, POB 6946-D, Chicago, IL 60680-6946 Postcards preferred.

BECOME independently wealthy — Millionaire's secrets to wealth for the 80's. Free details. Mason Book Company, 2427 So. Beverly Dr., L.A., CA 90034.

BECOMING A MILLIONAIRE has just become a whole lot easier. Let me show you how I succeed where others fail. Mary's Success In Prosperity, P.O. Box 3095, Providence, R.I. 02907.

\$500 Weekly possible! Commission mailing program. Work at home offer. Free Details. Pioneer Associates, Box 986(DA), Tualatin, OR 97062.

PROFITS FROM GOVERNMENT SURPLUS. Buy and resell Government Surplus for big profits! Complete report tells how. Includes surplus directory, case histories. \$2.00. Meadowlake Corp., 25 Blanchard, Box 497, Northport, NY 11768.

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

OVERWEIGHT? Heartburn? Ulcers? Other problems? A safe, natural, inexpensive product available locally. Guaranteed report. \$2.00: A&A Publications POB 1252, W. Chester, PA 19380.

PARAPSYCHOLOGY

ESP — DO YOU HAVE IT? Fascinating kits reveal your abilities in: telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, precognition. KIT 1 — experiments with: pendulum, dice, compass, symbol cards. Only \$10.95 ppd. KIT 2: unique strobe-effect imager/viewer — plus: color gels and scenes, symbols, letters, numbers, and special optical semispheres. Only \$16.95 ppd. Each KIT includes: all equipment, detailed instructions, record sheets, PLUS a 40-minute cassette. SAVE \$3.00! Both kits: only \$24.90 ppd. MindQuest Institute, Box 16005-E, Baltimore, MD 21217.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Meet that special person—anywhere! Very low fees. DATELINE, 316 Fifth Ave., New York 10001, (212) 889-3230 or (312) 523-2100 or (213) 854-0640.

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Hundreds of sincere members! All Ages! Free information! Write: Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . without attending classes! Inexpensive, fast. Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP12, Tustin, CA 92680.

DEFEND Yourself. Defender spray stops attackers instantly. It could save your life — Send \$3.50: Dann Products, Box 465, Riverdale, N.Y. 10471.

SCANDINAVIAN Ladies, 18-68, sincere, seek correspondence, friendship, marriage. Details: Scannacub, Dept. C03, POB 4, Pittsford, NY 14534. (Please enclose stamp).

PRIVATE Address, for your Personal Correspondence. Confidential Services. Professional Mail Forwarding, Box 561-H, Milton, MA 02186.

RADIO & TELEVISION

CABLE TV DESCRABLERS and CONVERTERS. PLANS and PARTS. Build or buy. For information send \$2.00. C&D Electronics, P.O. Box 21, Jenison, MI 49428.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11209.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs recorded and published. Radio-TV promotions. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

SONGWRITERS: Exciting offer! Poems, songs needed! Free evaluation. Creative Music Productions, Box 1943-A5, Houston, TX 77001.

SONGWRITERS. The Guild was organized 28 years ago to help writers produce good songs and sell them. National Songwriters Guild, 2421 Walnut Rd., Pontiac, MI 48057.

SPECIAL SERVICES

MAIL FORWARDED 5 days a week or will hold for instructions. Itineraries followed. Message Service. Mbr. Chamber of Commerce, MCCA, Inc., Box 2870, Estes Park, Colorado 80517. (800) 525-5304.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE

MOONSTONE BOOKCELLARS, INC., 2145 PENN. AVE., NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037. WASHINGTON'S ONLY SCIENCE AND MYSTERY SPECIALTY BOOKSHOP. 202-659-2600.

UNUSUAL BOOKS

THE INTELLIGENCE LIBRARY: Many unique books & official manuals on RESTRICTED subjects — Bugging, Wiretapping, Locksmithing, Covert Investigations, & MUCH MORE. Free brochures. MENTOR, DP, 135-53 No. Blvd., Flushing, N.Y. 11354.

ELLERY QUEEN

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

Send to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE
Classified Advertising Department/Suite 1401
380 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE: _____

DATE: _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

20 WORD MINIMUM

Only \$27.00 for 20 Words or Less
\$1.35 each additional word

Capitalized words add—40¢ per word

**SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS
SAME COPY ORDER**

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the
5th day of the third preceding month for issue in
which ad is to appear.

Words at \$1.35 each \$ _____

Capitalized word at .40¢ each \$ _____

Total amount for 1 ad \$ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total \$ _____ x 3 = \$ _____

(b) Multiply total amount on above line by $\frac{1}{3}$ = \$ _____

(c) Total amount for 3 ads \$ _____

(Example: One 20 word ad \$27.00 x 3
months = \$81.00 x .85 = \$68.85)

\$ _____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading _____

(FOR ADDITIONAL WORDS ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET)

(1) \$27.00	(2) \$27.00	(3) \$27.00	(4) \$27.00	(5) \$27.00
(6) \$27.00	(7) \$27.00	(8) \$27.00	(9) \$27.00	(10) \$27.00
(11) \$27.00	(12) \$27.00	(13) \$27.00	(14) \$27.00	(15) \$27.00
(16) \$27.00	(17) \$27.00	(18) \$27.00	(19) \$27.00	(20) \$27.00
(21) \$26.35	(22) \$26.70	(23) \$31.05	(24) \$32.40	(25) \$33.75
(26) \$35.10	(27) \$36.45	(28) \$37.80	(29) \$39.15	(30) \$40.50

HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word: Mark Holly, 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017; 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone #: 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each: Garden City, New York; 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D., F.O.B., P.O., U.S.A., 7x10, 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words) Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE**

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY—JULY-DECEMBER 1982

AIKEN, JOAN: Something Very Obsessional	November	112
ALEXANDER, GARY: The Invisible Man	October	113
AMLAW, MARY: Where Were You, Mamie?	July	90
BANKIER, WILLIAM: Where Will It All End?	September	20
Doors	October	133
BAXT, GEORGE: Clap Hands, There Goes Charlie	August	66
I Wish He Hadn't Said That	November	92
BERKELEY, ANTHONY: White Butterfly	December	24
BISHOP, MICHAEL: Unlikely Friends	November	58
BLOCK, LAWRENCE: The Ehrengraf Alternative	September	69
BOLAND, JOHN C.: Worth More Dead	November	37
BOND, RALEIGH: The Locker-Room Mystery	October	90
BRAND, CHRISTIANNA: From the Balcony	October	19
BRAUND, MARY: The Crystal Set	December	76
BREEN, JON L.: The Jury Box	July-December	
BRETT, SIMON: Privileged Information	July	132
BRITTAİN, WILLIAM: Mr. Strang Takes a Partner	Mid-July	102
Mr. Strang Studies Exhibit A	October	48
BROOKS, MARY A.: A Sharp Instrument	December	22
BURANELLI, MARGUERITE: Pressed for Time	Mid-July	41
BUSH, GEOFFREY: The oo y Trap	September	134
CLEMMONS, THOMAS: Taking Ways	October	41
CONROW, ED: Not on the Menu	November	44
CURTISS, URSULA: A Beneficial Walk	Mid-July	20
DALE, CELIA: Eleven Years After	Mid-July	36
DARLING, JEAN: I Never Saw His Face	December	122
DART, LAREN: Automation	August	28
DAVIDSON, AUBREY: The King of Chicago	November	138
DESMOND, MURIEL: A Tidy Solution	Mid-July	115
DIRCKX, JOHN H.: The Assassination of Bulldog Dowd	November	73
ECKELS, ROBERT EDWARD: The Canadian Caper	October	29
ELDRED, KATE: Prophet in His Own Country	Mid-July	100
FIELDS, SHARLIE: She Should Have Stuck with Lambs	December	135
GALERSTEIN, DAVID H.: Sir Roger's Wish	Mid-July	50
GALVIN, WILLIAM: Double Jeopardy	Mid-July	140
GARVE, ANDREW: The Last Link	September	124
GRENIER, MARK: Overtiring Undertaking	December	121
HEBERT, JOHN M.: Wandering Minstrel	October	132
HERRING, BETTY L.: "In" Specter	October	122
HOCH, EDWARD D.: The Problem of the Bootlegger's Car	July	140
The Flying Fiend	Mid-July	6
The Witch of Park Avenue	August	136
One Moment of Madness	September	6
The Spy and the Village Murder	October	6

(continued on page 159)

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY—JULY-DECEMBER 1982

HOCH, EDWARD D.: The Theft of the Used Teabag	November	139
The Problem of the Tin Goose	December	136
HOCHSTEIN, DALE: Crime of Passion	December	70
HOLDEN, M. EDWARD: A Double Score	July	62
The Great Escape	Mid-July	92
A Steal	November	100
HOLDING, JAMES: More Grave Tones	Mid-July	72
A Decent Price for a Painting	August	19
The Photographer and the Final Payment	December	97
HOWARD, CLARK: Death Snow	Mid-July	51
Old Soldiers	September	139
All the Heroes Are Dead	December	6
HUGHES, RILEY: Q. and A.	October	72
JANES, LOLA STRONG: Wanted: One Villain	August	156
JEWETT, GEOFFREY H.: Bad Call	August	76
JORDAN, CLEMENTS: Village Chorus	September	65
KEATING, H. R. F.: Dead-Letter Drop	Mid-July	125
LACEY, MARGARET: Face at the Window	Mid-July	86
LAZAROU, ROSEMARY: Pillow Talk	September	91
LEIBY, G. STERLING: Nursery Rhyme (1980's Version)	Mid-July	19
LOVESEY, PETER: The Butchers	Mid-July	73
Taking Possession	November	6
LUTZ, JOHN: Deeper and Deeper	September	120
MCCOMB, RALPH W.: Modest Operandi	July	68
MCCONNELL, CHARLES R.: Waiting for Wayne	November	101
MCDADE, T. M.: Jimson's Folly	October	73
MCGERR, PATRICIA: A Date in Helsinki	October	63
McMARTIN, SEAN: The Beer Bust	December	48
MARLOWE, DAN J.: Two Birds with One Stone	July	109
MATSUMOTO, SEICHO: The Humble Coin	July	53
MAYBERRY, FLORENCE V.: Where Are the Birds?	August	112
MORLAND, NIGEL: Minithriller	October	87
MOYES, PATRICIA: Hit and Run	July	36
The Honest Blackmailer	September	111
The Small Train Robbery	November	130
MULLEN, M. E.: Safe Money	December	88
NATSUKI, SHIZUKO: I Can't Help Loving Him	July	115
NUSSBAUM, AL: Role Model	December	71
OLSON, DONALD: Too Good To Be True	August	50
A Bit of Excitement	November	26
O'SULLIVAN, DENNIS MICHAEL: Rosa by Any Other Name ...	July	100
OWENS, BARBARA: Silent Witness	November	119
PARRY, HENRY T.: Death Imminent	Mid-July	42
The Right Thing To Do	October	104

(continued on page 160)

INDEX TO VOLUME EIGHTY—JULY-DECEMBER 1982

(continued from page 159)

PENTECOST, HUGH: Act of Violence	Mid-July	141
Bitter Secret	October	140
PHAON, JERROLD: Something Comforting In It	October	42
PORTER, JOYCE: Dover Sees the Trees	September	38
PORTER, R. E.: Crime Beat	July-December	
POWELL, JAMES: The Vigil of Death	July	69
The Haunted Bookcase	August	37
A Bagdad Reckoning	November	17
RAINEY, CARRELL I.: The Ballad of Diamond Jim	Mid-July	85
RITCHIE, JACK: The Golden Goose	Mid-July	65
The Fifth Grave	October	123
ROMUN, ISAK: Material Witness	August	126
Death's Gray Land	December	37
SANBORN, E. C.: A la Carte	November	90
SCOTT, JEFFRY: Something from the Past	Mid-July	116
A Hard Man To Surprise	September	53
SEAGO, KATE: The Puzzle Cube	August	61
SINGER, TED: Once More the Butler	July	63
SMALL, J. M.: A Free Man	September	31
SPENCER, ROSS H.: Murder Mystery	September	118
STEINBRUNNER, CHRIS: Bloody Visions	July-December	
STINSON, JOSEPH C.: Teammates	October	59
STUART, IAN: Nobody's Told You, Have They?	August	29
SYMONS, JULIAN: The Flaw	July	5
The Dream Is Better	August	6
TALLEY, CECIL: Just a Matterhorn of Principle	September	123
TOMLINSON, GERALD: Hizzoner's Water Supply	December	111
TRACY, JACK: Spirit Weather	Mid-July	131
TWOHY, ROBERT: The Bathtub Murders	September	94
VAN DE WETERING, JANWILLEM: The Machine Gun and the Mannequin	Mid-July	27
VAUGHAN, PATRICK M.: TV Mystery	October	112
WALLACE, PENELOPE: The Traveling Medicine Chest	October	119
WALSH, THOMAS: Sitting Duck	July	41
WASYLYK, STEPHEN: The Katzenbacher Principle	December	58
WEINSTEIN, LOUIS: Clean Sweep for Lou	August	100
WESTLAKE, DONALD E.: Re Porter	July	22
YORKE, MARGARET: Fair and Square	August	86
Threescore and Ten	November	52

"Q"

NEXT ISSUE...

13 NEW stories—including

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Sir Gideon Parrot)

ROBERT TWOHY (about a somewhat happy ending)

CHRISTIANNABRAND (about a piece of cake)

JANWILLEM van de WETERING (about Inspector Saito)

FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY (about the hallucination)

JAMES POWELL (about death at the Christmas hour)

KAREN A. PRINCE*Editorial Assistant*

RALPH RUBINO *Art Director*

GERALD HAWKINS Associate Art Director

CARL BARTÉE*Production Director*

CAROLE DIXON *Production Manager*

ROBERT CASTARDI *Circulation Director,*

MICHAEL PILSON *Retail Marketing*MICHAEL DILLON*Newsstand Sales*

Director

ALAN INGLIS *Circulation Director,*

LAYNE LAYTON *Subscription*

LAYNE LAYTON Promotion Manager
IRIS TEMPLE Director, Child Support

IRIS TEMPLE Director, Subsidiary Rights
BARBARA RAZYN Seminars, 1-800-333-3333

BARBARA BAZYN Permissions & Contracts

ROSE WAYNER *Manager*
Classified Advertising

ROSE WAYNER *Classified Advertising*

Director

JIM CAPPELLO Advertising Manager
WILLIAM F. BATTISTA Advertising Director

WILLIAM F. BATTISTA Advertising Director

JOEL DAVIS
President & Publisher

LEONARD F. PINTO
*Vice President &
General Manager*

CAROLE DOLPH GROSS
Vice President
Marketing & Editorial

LEONARD H. HABAS
Vice President
Circulation

FRED EDINGER
*Vice President
Finance*

Advertising Sales Offices

NEW YORK
212-557-9100

CHICAGO
312-346-0712

LOS ANGELES
213-785-3114

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Vol. 80, No. 7, Whole No. 473, December, 1982. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at \$1.50 a copy. Annual subscriptions \$16.25 in U.S.A. and possessions; \$19.75 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 1930, Marion, Ohio, 43305. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. © 1982 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. ISSN: 0013-6328

Eberhart, Gardner, Christie, MacDonald, Cleary, Simenon, etc. 12 of their best \$1.

Now, as an introductory offer, you can get 12 full-length novels, including some of the finest mystery writing to appear in recent years, for only \$1.00.

You'll meet some of the greatest detectives who ever trapped a killer: Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, Travis McGee, Chief Superintendent Maigret, Perry Mason and others. You'll get involved in some of their most intriguing cases including: Nemesis, Halloween Party, A Purple Place for Dying, Maigret and the Apparition, The Case of the Postponed Murder. And that's just the beginning ... see the complete list on the back cover.

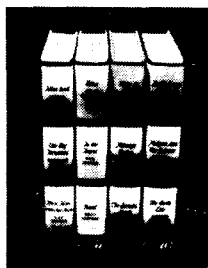
These spine-tingling mysteries cost \$82.95 in their publishers' editions. But you can get all 12 of them, in four handsome hardbound triple-volumes, for only \$1 as your introduction to The Detective Book Club.

As a member, you'll get, free, the club's monthly Preview, which describes in advance each month's selections. They're chosen by the club's editors, who select the best from more than 400 mysteries published each year. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it; there is no minimum number of books you must buy. And you may cancel your membership at any time.

When you accept a club selection, you get three complete, full length detective novels in one hardcover triple-volume like the ones shown on this page for only \$7.95. That's at least a \$6 saving per mystery if you were to buy them separately in the publishers' original editions.

Recent selections have included new thrillers by top names like those featured above, plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis, and many others. Start enjoying the benefits of membership in The Detective Book Club. Send no money now. You'll be billed later for your 12 mysteries. Send the coupon today to: The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

FILL OUT COUPON. CLIP ALONG DOTTED LINE—THEN MAIL.



Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my four triple volumes shown here, containing twelve mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all four volumes for the special new member price of only \$1 plus shipping or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections. I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book within 21 days and owe nothing. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only \$7.95, plus shipping. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

D19L6Q

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576.

2-AQ

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only; offer slightly different in Canada.

PUBLISHED BY
WALTER J. BLACK, INC.



ESTABLISHED 1923



**Next time you see a tree,
say thanks.**

Thanks
for books and pencils
and paper, thanks for wood to
build our homes and firewood
to keep us cozy in them, thanks
for violins and cellos and
guitars, thanks for furniture
and paints and paintbrushes,
thanks for maple syrup and
leeds, thanks for park benches
and gymnasium floors, thanks
for fruits and jams and jellies,
thanks for shade for a Sunday
afternoon nap, and a special

thanks for the oxygen we
breathe. Trees give us a lot.
Don't take them for granted.
Please be careful with fire
in the forest. A tree will
thank you.

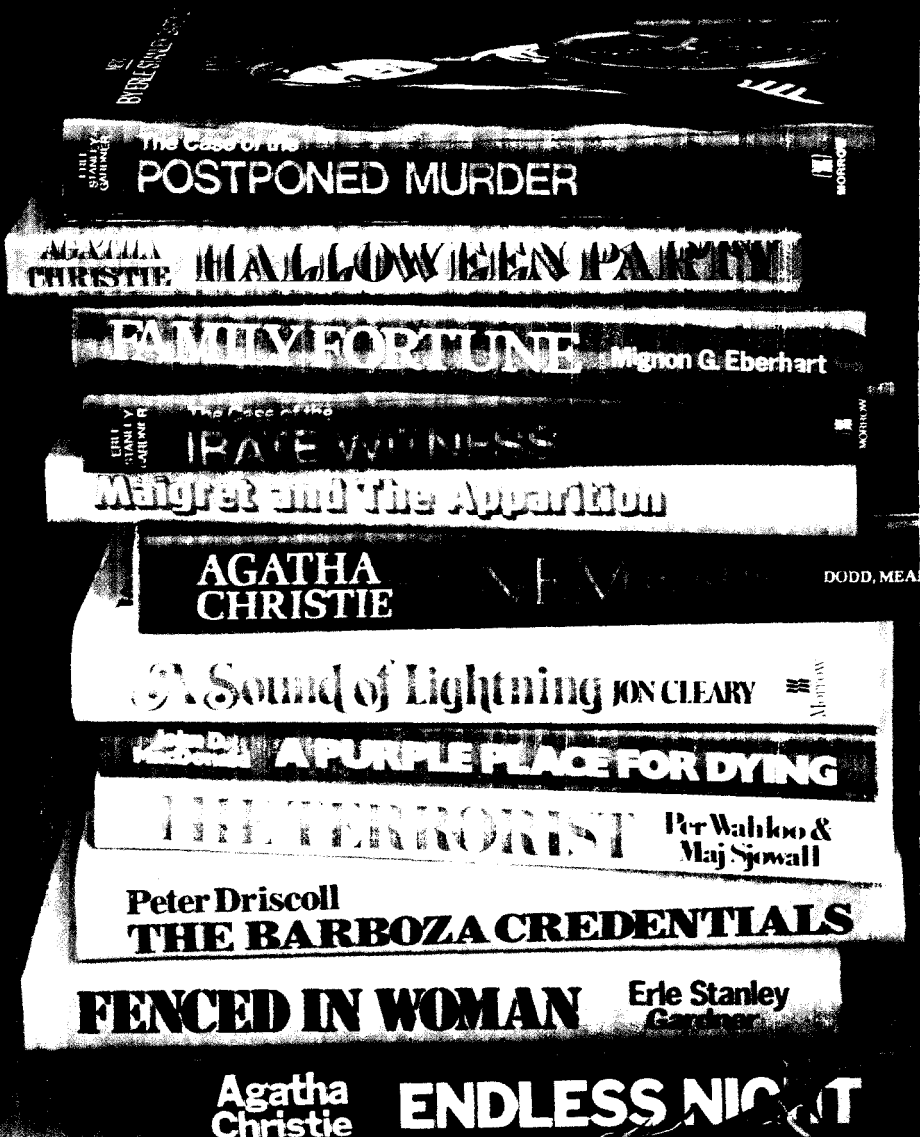
**Only you
can prevent
forest fires.**



Public Service of This Magazine & The Advertising Council

12 BIG NAME MYSTERIES FOR JUST \$1.

(Worth \$82.95 in publishers' editions!)



IN THIS ISSUE...
SPECIAL OFFER FROM
THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB

For details see last page.